

ACE

MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

■ ST ■ AMIGA ■ C64 ■
CPC ■ SPECTRUM ■ PC
■ NINTENDO ■ SEGA ■

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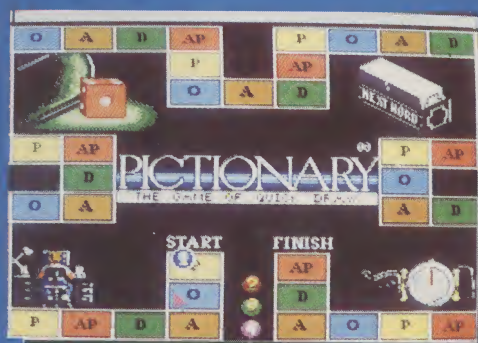
X-MAS RATED

Damocles and Inter-phase clash, Star Trek V takes off, and Cloud-master storms onto the Sega...



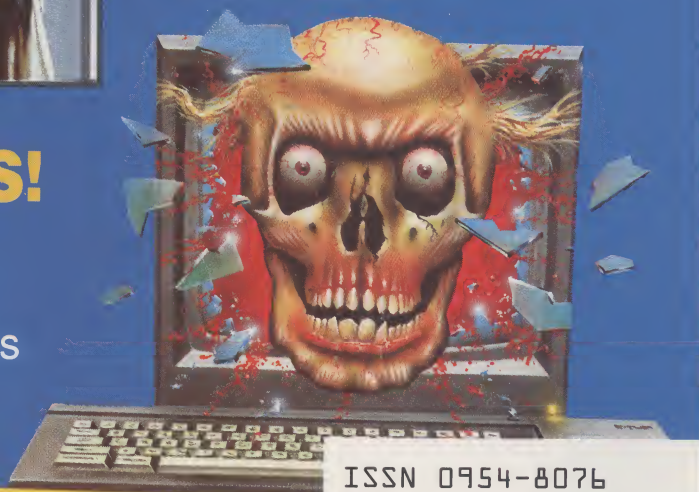
AARGHGH!

Could something *really nasty* happen to you while you play?



STUFF THIS!

Software houses rear Christmas turkeys. ACE carves them up...



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MORECA

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SPECIALS

TUNE IN TO FM TOWNS.....27

Fujitsu have produced a 32-bit games computer that comes with a built-in CD-ROM as standard. The graphics are red-hot and the software base features some stunning conversions of familiar titles. Drool over the details and start saving...

SHOCK HORROR!35

There you are, cowering behind the sofa in a cold sweat, trembling violently, stomach churning, and screaming for Mummy. Too bad everyone else is out for the evening. You knew it was foolish, but you just had to load up that game one more time, and now you're very, very sorry...Just a nasty dream? Or could software houses really give us the jitters?



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Everyone makes jokes about turkeys at Christmas, but it's no joke if you end up buying one. ACE checks out the heavyweight game contenders for Xmas '89.

FRUIT CASE155

That innocent-looking fruit machine has the same sound chip as your ST, more memory than a Spectrum, and is carefully programmed to swallow your cash. Fruit coder Lee Witek opens the case...

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Gamesters in Japan can now play *AfterBurner* on the first machine with a built-in CD-ROM...

TOWNS SENSATION



Ever since we first printed a picture of Fujitsu's FM Towns computer, we've been inundated with demands from readers for more information. We're delighted to oblige. Thanks to some timely co-operation from Japan's famous Log In magazine, we've been able to bring you a report on this record-breaking 32-bit games micro on page 27...

FM TOWNS - a machine to satisfy your wildest dreams, complete with CD-ROM and massive processing power...

ANCO

Anco are celebrating the launch of *Player Manager* by giving you

the

WHAT A MONTH!

OK, so Christmas is on the way, but that's still no excuse for bombarding you with all the goodies we've packed into this issue. Find out about Tetris II; the extraordinary FM Towns computer; a simulator that plunges you into the depths of the human immune system; a coin-op that contains a PC Engine; which of this month's games you've got to grab; and much, much more. Not only that, but we've gone overboard on the giveaways. You can win an Atari Lynx, or (courtesy of Anco) a stunning Sony video camera, and pin up on your wall the ultimate new technology wallchart.

The ACE Technochart comes free with this issue and gives you details on almost all the hardware you're likely to find in the shops in Britain - and quite a few that you won't. It gives you a complete guide to computer entertainment in one glorious full colour experience. Eat turkey, Santa...

OVER THE RAINBOW109

A C64 game that looks as if it's running on an Amiga? A game about cigarettes?? Visit Rainbow Arts in Germany and find out for yourself...

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New simulator technology is being used by Walt Disney to give punters the experience of a lifetime, including a journey through the human body...

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Danger! This month's Screentest section is positively scorching! The long-awaited *Damocles* from Novagen clashes with the superlative *Interphase* from Mirrorsoft; Rainbow Arts' *Rock & Roll* proves devastatingly playable, and *Star Trek* takes off...for the fifth time.

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Get your paws on one of the world's most desirable hand-held consoles - absolutely free!

ANCO BANCO!40

Win a free video camera and record those games live!



Anco's *Player Manager* takes the field...

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Maps, cheats, hints, and tips enable you to kick ass where you might otherwise wimp out...

FREE ISSUE!120

A year of authoritative game reviews, exclusive coverage of exciting new technology, and a free issue of Britain's best computer entertainment magazine - for only £17.95.

Journey into the human body with Lucasfilm's latest mega-simulator.

See page 104.

BANCO!

the chance to win a free video camera - kick off on p.40.

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Drivin'



60

DOMARK

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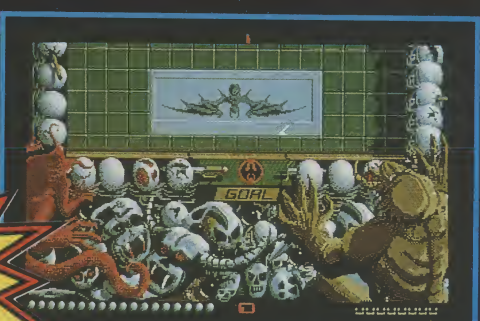
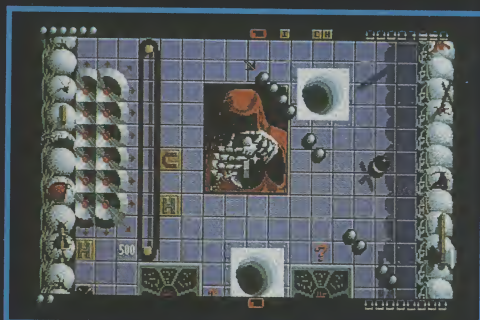
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BALLISTIX



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Released
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BALLISTIX It's a whole new ball game!

Sick of silly old soccer? Tired of pathetic pinball? Then you need a dose of *Ballistix* – the fastest, wackiest, toughest ball game yet to appear on a computer. *Ballistix* just explodes with excitement, puzzles and an amazing **130 different screens** of frenetic action, on the PC, Atari ST and Amiga. On the C64 version there are **64 screens**.

The aim of the game is simple; score more goals than your opponent to win the match. Doing it is a different matter as **splitters** fill the screen with dozens of balls, **tunnels** hide them from view, **bumpers** bounce balls all over the show, fiendish **red arrows** speed them up to almost impossible velocity, **magnets** pull them away from your control, and much, much more.

Ballistix is incredibly flexible, too. You can play against the computer or another player, set the speed if you can't stand the pace, define where the balls are fired and their velocity, rack up bonuses that will get you extra goals and then, at the end of an exhausting game, set your name in pride of place on the high-score table. And it's all played to the accompaniment of a throbbing sound-track and a crowd that applauds your every goal.

Ballistix is definitely not a game for wimps. It's tough, fast, challenging and incredibly competitive – in fact, it's just the kind of game you like.

AMIGA/ATARI ST £19.95 PC £24.95 C64 DISK £12.99/CASS. £9.99

Screen Shots taken from the Amiga version

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REVIEWS

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

Realtime Games Software's long due, but eagerly awaited, follow-up to the gaming classic *Carrier Command* should be out next March. The game is to be called *Battle Command*, and although it places the player in a futuristic tank, the guys at Realtime are keen to stress that "it is not a tank simulation". Instead, *Battle Command* is in the *Carrier Command* tradition using a multi-stage game format with approximately 30 mission scenarios, which the player must complete before the "final encounter". Just what the final encounter is, the guys at Realtime aren't saying at this stage, but suffice to say that with up to 32 missions to complete there should be plenty to keep even the hardened tank commander happy!

Battle Command has already



Will *Battle Command* top the success of *Carrier Command*?

been under development on mainly 16-bit formats for the past 18 months, with Realtime making improvements to the unimprovable *Carrier Command*. These

"tweaks" include far more complex solid 3D graphics with highly detailed objects, and a better gameplay combination of strategy and shoot'em-up.

TEXT GAME OVER?

Trolls, hobbits, dragons, and gnomes staged a mass demonstration outside Level 9's offices last night, following the news that Britain's best known fantasy software house have announced their last traditional adventure title.

'It's true', said Pete Austin,

addressing a militant crowd with hair between the toes, 'We shall not be releasing any more adventures, unless Scapeghost (reviewed this issue, p.145) sells much better than expected. There have been so many good adventures written over the past few years that producing new ones which will sell in any quantity is

getting more and more difficult.'

Narrowly avoiding a fireball from a distressed cleric, Austin went on to reminisce about *The Age of The Adventure*. 'Our favourite game, not including our own, of course, had to be an Infocom title...' (loud sniggers from a small group of Leather Goddesses) '...Trinity...' (shrieks of indignation from the same), '...and our favourite Level 9 titles were Ingrid's Back and, of the older games, *Dungeon Adventure*.'

As grown hobbits broke down and wept, Austin conceded that times were changing; 'We released *Colossal Adventure* back in 1981. Since then it's sold around fifty thousand copies. We still get orders for it, but only a couple a week and those are mostly from people wanting to complete their collections. Nowadays everyone wants animated graphics and arcade action. However the time will come when tactile feedback and headsets will give the adventure format a new lease of life...'

Meanwhile, at another

LOCK AND LOAD

Are you worried about the increase in micro thefts? Can you bear to leave your micro unprotected? Are you sick of your kid brother borrowing your computer?

Well Homeguard UK may



have the perfect solution to your troubles with the Audio and Video Guard anti-theft alarm. This a compact security device used to protect electric appliances (micros, videos, hi-fi's) that are permanently connected to the mains.

The unit uses a electromagnetic current sensing strip to detect if the power to your appliance has been switched off, unplugged or had its cable cut (ouch). Any of these actions would result in a loud piercing alarm lasting 45 seconds.

The unit runs off a P33 battery, costs £14.95 and can be obtained from Homeguard UK on 0327 78874.

rally nearby, Anita Sinclair of *Magnetic Scrolls*, producers of *The Pawn* and *Guild of Thieves*, was declaiming exultantly about the future of the very same game format that Pete Austin claimed was dying. 'Of course there's a future for the text adventure,' she cried, 'There will be a whole sheaf of adventure titles from *Magnetic Scrolls* coming out next year. The first will appear in March next year and will be a true *Magnetic Scrolls* fantasy. It will be the start of the text adventure, not the end...'

Whooping excitedly, Ms Sinclair was then carried off into the night shoulder-high by several black-leather-clad orcs. The apparent death of the text adventure appears, therefore, to be somewhat in doubt...



Scapeghost: reviewed in this month's issue

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

At long last there is a computer show devoted to you – the gamer. There won't be a business machine in sight at next year's European Computer Entertainment Show – the only computer show dedicated solely to games.

ECES is sponsored by ACE and our sister publications *The One*, *C+VG*, *Commodore User* and *Sinclair User*. Each magazine will run a special event during the show, such as *C+VG* organising the World Computer Gaming Championship in conjunction with leading software company US Gold. Of course ACE will be running its own event – we'll keep you informed with further details over the coming months.

All of the leisure industries big names like Ocean, US Gold and Psygnosis will be at



ECES, showing you their latest games software – the chart-topping titles of Christmas 1990.

In effect, ECES has taken over the PC Show – the computer industries premier show. "ECES will be more of a festival than an exhibition," said the show's enthusiastic spokesperson Dean Barrett, "we will get the excitement back into the computer entertainment industry." ECES will be extensively covered on TV and in the national press, acting as a much needed forum for computer entertainment.

The European Computer Entertainment Show will be held at Earls Court from 13th-16th September, 1990. We look forward to seeing you there...

WE ARE GLASS

You could be playing your favourite game on your window, patio door or car windscreen if Pilkington Glass' predictions for the next decade become reality.

In its *Fenestration 2000* report, Pilkington believes the information technology and building construction industries will merge together to produce hi-tech buildings in the true cyberpunk style. This sci-fi projection adds up to video or TV pictures and computer data being displayed on an "average" sheet of glass producing a high resolution flat-screen colour display of "photographic" quality. You can see ACE's predictions for games on glass in the free pull-out wall-chart in this issue.

We can't wait to hear the double-glazing salesperson pitch for this one...

EXTRA TIME FOR KICK OFF

Kick Off, probably the best football simulation available and one of the best games released this year, is about to gain a new lease of life thanks to the release of an *Extra Time* Expansion Disk.

Extra Time is designed to appeal both average and seasoned *Kick Off* player alike, thanks

CUTE COIN-OP CRAZE

The next time you go into the arcades for a bit of mindless electronic violence, you may face cutesy balls of plastic fluff instead of *Operation Blood'n'Guts Terminator*.

At least that's the theory many Japanese coin-op manufacturers are subscribing to. The evidence to back this statement up came with the JAMMA coin-op show in Japan last month, when over 50% of the attractions on show consisted of cutesy novelty games (like the one where you hit lovable characters over the head with a mallet) and children's playrides, as opposed to the latest in turbo 68000, multi-blitter games decks. The JAMMA show has traditionally been the place to see "next year's" coin-op blockbusters.

The reason behind the decline in arcade electronic entertainment? Most probably a lack in origi-

nality – after all when was the last time you played a new coin-op which wasn't a shoot'em-up, beat'em-up or racing game? Over the past three years, coin-op manufacturers have not so much improved upon the gameplay, as the electronic audio-visual trickery that's there to impress you into forking out £1 per game. Of course, there are a few exceptions – but these just help to prove the rule.

So what of the future? Coin-op electronic games will still be there – there will just be fewer of them, and as a consequence they will be of a higher standard and perhaps a little more original – which is ultimately what we all want, yes?

As for the home micro scene which has followed the coin-op industry very closely – indeed a little too closely – over the past three years, many software publishers are gleefully looking forward to having the chance to produce superior computer games as a result of the coin-op's decline in numbers. In fact, one leading industry figure told ACE: "there will be an emphasis away from coin-op conversions towards RPG and strategy computer games – and our company is perfectly poised for such a change in the games market".

It looks as though gamers will not so much be spoilt for choice, as spoilt for quality and originality – we'll have to wait and see, but in the meantime why not write to ACE and tell us your views: Coin-op confrontation, ACE Letters, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.



XENON II MEGABLASTS ONTO PC



Xenon II, the chart-topping Bitmap Brothers blaster is going to make it onto the PC later this month. The 910-Rated Amiga version of *Xenon II* was reviewed in ACE issue 25, and quote: "stretches the Amiga further than any shoot'em-up has ever

stretched it before".

PC *Xenon II* should match the quality of the ST and Amiga versions and will probably become the PC shoot'em-up. We we can't wait to hear the Bomb the Bass Megablast soundtrack through our PC speaker...

to a whole host of new features including: full control over the power of shots, headers and chips; player control of the goalie when taking a goal-kick; four more team tactics to choose from; four new playing surfaces – Hard, Wet, Soggy and Artificial; players can select their team from a squad of twenty; and there's a new set of refs to encounter.

Extra Time costs £9.95 for ST and Amiga, obviously requires the original *Kick Off* disk, and should be available later this month. Meanwhile, Anco has also launched another football-sim, *Player Manager* (see page 40 for a brilliant competition to celebrate its launch) and is currently working on *Kick Off 2*, due out sometime next year.



Microprose's Wild Bill out headhunting.

WHO'S IN THE HOUSE?

Mega bucks US software company, Microprose is setting up its own in-house programming team in the UK. The house crew should consist of about 5-6 programmers devoting themselves to ST and Amiga conversions of Stateside Microprose's popular PC products like *F-19 Stealth Fighter*, *F-15 Strike Eagle II* and *M1 Tank Platoon*. In fact, *F-19 Stealth Fighter* should be the first off the conversion line with an Amiga *F-19* due next month and a ST version following in January or February.

What this should mean to you is more ST and Amiga conversions – faster!

But according to a Microprose spokesperson, the reason behind this move into personal proggy possession is simple: Microprose doesn't want its valuable PC source code to go walkies outside the company – and our UK programmers can apparently show the Yanks a thing or two when it comes to programming the ST and Amiga.

As ACE goes to press, Microprose is just on the point of signing up software development house Core Design to produce the follow up to the immensely successful *Rick*

ACE DREAM MAC-HINE



What piece of hardware have ACE editorial been drooling over this month? Is it the Lynx, Konix or PC Engine 2? No, it's the new Apple Mac Portable! But why would a bunch of games freaks be interested in a top powered 16MHz CMOS 68000 portable computer with 1.44Mb SuperDrive, 1Mb RAM, optional 40Mb hard disk, 6502 just to handle power management, and the crispest display to be seen on any portable micro? Easy, the Mac plays the best game of

Tetris this side of the Nintendo Game Boy. Then there's *Cosmic Osmo* and *Crystal Quest*, and wouldn't it be great to lay out the ACE pages on the way to work, and of course the pose rating of using a Mac on the train goes right off the scale. So what stops us from all going out and getting one today? That's even easier – the whopping gigantic asking price of £3995 to £4495 – that's what! But we can dream can't we?

Dangerous. Imaginatively titled, *Rick Dangerous 2* this sequel will see our hero in space – up against more puzzles and action. It should be available sometime in the Spring.

BARGAIN 286 PC

Atari has launched a price busting 286 PC for an amazing starting price of £599.99 ex VAT. The Atari ABC 286 is the first in a new range of low cost Atari PC's, and comes with a single 3.5" disk drive, 1Mb RAM, motherboard expansion and 3 other expansion slots. The starting price is for the CPU only, other options include: CPU & EGA mono monitor (£699.99 ex VAT), CPU & 30Mb hard disk (£799.99 ex VAT) and CPU, 30Mb hard disk & EGA mono monitor (£899.99 ex VAT).

The price of higher powered 286 and 386 PC's are starting to tumble, and hopefully other PC manufacturers will take Atari's lead in reducing prices further. This could help the predicted rise of the PC as a serious contender in the games machine stakes over



the coming year, as PC games software sales start to seriously compete with those of the ST and Amiga.

CHESS GOES ONLINE

Prestel has introduced a new service catering for online Chess enthusiasts. The ChessBox Club is designed to cater for 'correspondence' chess players, but offers a faster, more reliable and more economic alternative to conventional postal chess.

The ChessBox Club is affiliated to the British Chess Federation (BCF) and The British Postal Chess Federation, and Chess-Match will host an annual tourna-

ment, in close conjunction with the BCF, from January 1990 onwards. Other ChessBox Club services include ChessMate (where members are put in touch with each other) and ChessMoves (a news, reviews, event diary and game results information desk).

Subscription to ChessBox Club is free of charge to Prestel users, for further details contact Dialcom on Freephone 0800 200 700.

GREMLIN ON SKIDZ ROW

Gremlin is counting on skateboarding and BMXing still being "in" this month, with the release of *Skidz*, a BMX and skateboard simulation with just one simple task – you have to become the "hippest and smartest kid in town". *Skidz* is played over 7 levels and 7 days with you riding either a BMX bike or skateboard through city streets, parks, canal ways, beaches and construction sites while encountering the likes of thugs, cats, grannies, tramps and joggers. *Skidz* is out later this month on ST and Amiga for £19.99, with the Amiga version using a full-screen overscan display. *Skidz* is also under development on the Nintendo console, which is scheduled for release sometime next year.

Gremlin should also have *Footballer of the Year II* and *Ultimate Golf* out this month on various formats, though *Ramrod* – the experimental game featured back in ACE issue 1 – has been delayed (again) to sometime in 1990.



GAME BOY HEADS FOR 5 MILLION

Nintendo's Game Boy hand-held console is enjoying phenomenal success in Japan and the States with Nintendo looking set to ship four to five million units next year. So far this year, Nintendo has already shipped 1.1 million Game



Boys, because Japanese and American kids are going "crazy" over playing portable *Super Mario Bros.* and *Tetris*.

SOFT HOUSE

New sound sampling techniques, combined with the falling price of dedicated MIDI music peripherals, is giving a new lease of life to game soundtracks.

Currently, sampled sound tracks on games like *Blood Money* and *Xenon II* require considerable amounts of memory, even when compression techniques are used. At the same time, these games are proving that the multi-channel stereo noise is a real turn-on for gamers and an important part of the playing experience. So what's to be done?

Sierra On-Line have for some time been producing games with MIDI soundtracks that will drive certain Roland and Yamaha modules. These make the normal Xenon-type tracks sound pretty puny by comparison when output through a suitable set-up. You can check out the hardware side in this month's issue on page 123.

Not all of us, however, can

IT'S A S.T.U.N.N.E.R.

Hot on the heels of the coin-op's UK debut last month at the Associated Leisure Preview trade show, Domark has signed up the home micro conversion rights to Atari Games' latest coin-op.

S.T.U.N. Runner is a futuristic ride-type game, placing you in control of a 21st century billion dollar racing vehicle with the power to reach speeds in excess of 900mph. Your machine is equipped with powerful lasers and shockwaves which will stop everything in their tracks. Perhaps the most stunning (ouch!) feature of *S.T.U.N. Runner* is its realistic polygon generated 3D visuals.

Commenting on the acquisition, Domark's joint managing director, Mark Strachan told ACE: "This is a marvellous game and is destined to be a major coin-op licence later next year. Rather than being completely brilliant... it's completely *S.T.U.N.N.I.N.G.*"

S.T.U.N. Runner should be out later next year on all major formats. In the meantime, you'll just have to make do with Domark's *Hard Drivin'* coin-op conversion – widely tipped as this year's front runner for Christmas Number One. Take a look at next month's Screentest to see if we agree...



Atari S.T.U.N.S the coin-op competition

afford £200+ for a MIDI sound system. Good news then that Rainbow Arts have developed a new sampling system for including more sampled music in games using less space. The software system first breaks up the sampled track into sections, having scanned it for repetitions and redundancy. It then stores each section as an indexed file. The sound track program simply selects the sections it needs in the order defined by the sound track file.

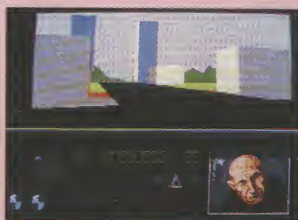
As a result, claims Teut Weidemann of Rainbow Arts, you'll be able to play Rainbow Arts games with immensely long sampled sound tracks without having to fork out for the extra disks that might otherwise be involved, or buy memory expansions for your machine.

Expect even more radical sound improvements when we move over to CD-ROM, which shares a common data format with the standard CD audio system.

ALL ACTION LOGOTRON

Logotron, the software developer responsible for the excellent *Xor* and *Archipelagos* strategy games, is currently working on a number of "action" titles due for release between now and Spring 1990.

Probably the most exciting release is *Resolution 101* (current working title), which is being programmed by Astral Software, the team behind *Archipelagos*. The game itself is a futuristic vehicle simulation featuring a combination of 3D vector graphics and high-speed sprites used to produce a believable sci-fi cityscape. During play, you'll have to hunt



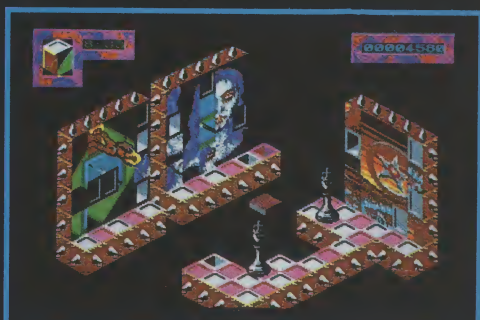
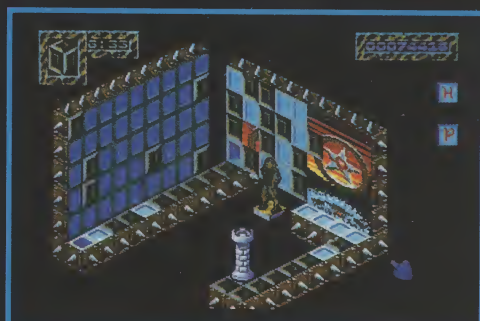
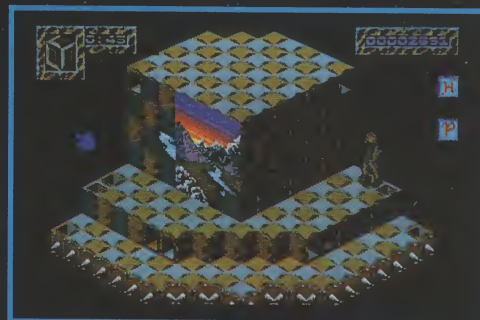
down villains for a bounty – which may sound easy enough, but as you wade through the scum of the city, each thug will get progressively tougher and smarter. To help your fight against crime you'll be able to upgrade your craft with extra armour and armaments and even vehicle type –

the most desirable of which is the all-terrain amphibious craft.

The game is a sort of cross between the John Carpenter film *Escape from New York* and the cult board game *Battle Cars*. ACE saw a running demo a couple of weeks back and it's looking hotter than *Archipelagos* – with better graphics and far more game-play action. Expect to see it on ST, Amiga and PC during Spring 1990.

Logotron is also planning to release *Archipelagos* on the Mac, "due to the high levels of American demand". No dates or prices though.

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Screen Shots taken from the Amiga and PC Versions

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ACE LETTERS

A DREAM MACHINE, TROUBLE WITH THE WIFE, AND A 24 MILE LONG COMMS CABLE (OH YEAH??) AND OTHER INSPIRED MISSIVES. DON'T FORGET, THESE CORRESPONDENTS AREN'T YOUR AVERAGE PIMPLY WALLIES, THEY'RE ACE READERS...AND THAT MEANS THEY'RE A CUT ABOVE THE NORM. HONESTLY...

THROMBOBO LAMENT

I was wondering if you could solve a mystery for me. What has happened to the Pink Pages section of your magazine now that you have been taken over. Where has N'GAR THROMBOBO suddenly disappeared to? And what has become of the excellent section on Games Design? I appreciate that there must have been quite a lot of confusion caused by the takeover and I hope these features return to the magazine as soon as possible.

While we are on the subject of solving mysteries, could you please tell me whatever happened to an old computer magazine called Home Computing Weekly? I used to get every issue when I owned my Texas T199/4A computer, but it suddenly disappeared after issue 133. This magazine used to have a story called Ron Complex (a fine piece of prose) which was left in the air by the magazine's disappearance, and I still have not received my prize for having a letter printed in issue 119. I hope that N'GAR THROMBOBO is not left in mid-air as poor Ron Complex was.

Onto new subjects, and the letter that you received from Serge Diekstra in issue 23. What an intelligent person this dutchman is, but there is one thing that stops me from from doing the same as he, fellow users. I now own an Atari ST, but I am the only person in my area who I know owns one. Serge's suggestion (to form a small collective amongst your friends for buying software. Ed.) is a good one, but I feel it could only work for Commodore 64 and Spectrum owners in this country at the present moment. I suppose that I will just have to wait until the ST becomes more affordable to the general public.

Now, to something which has been eating away at my brain for quite some weeks. When will FERRARI FORMULA ONE be released on the ST? I have driven myself crazy waiting for this superb game to be released. According to magazines it should have been released some months ago, and yet I still have not seen it in any of my local software shops.

Keep up the good work, and I hope you keep up the same standards now that you have been taken over.

Neil Luckman, Birmingham

Thanks for the good wishes, Neil. The ACE move to London has occasioned a lot of administrative difficulty for us (mostly to do with prize-winners, to whom we offer our sincere apologies), but we're now sorting out the problems. One of the reasons why I was so keen (as one of the original editors) to work for the new owners is because I knew they had the financial resources to support the magazine in the long term. You'll be seeing the results of this over the next few issues as we have articles from America, Japan, and Russia – as well as continuing to commission the best writers we can find in the UK. As far as ST owners are concerned, I suspect that there are more out there than you think...

POST HASTE

I recently had to send some of my game disks back to their respective manufacturers after they had crashed and ceased to load. The responses I had were very interesting. I posted all the disks on a Friday morning.

Gremlin Graphics were first to the post (pardon the pun!) on Monday with a nice letter, a new disk,

and all sent by 1st class post. Incredible! And what a brilliant example of good PR. I will now always look on GG as a proficient and professional company.

Ocean were second a few days later with a large bag of posters and a new disk. Well done again to Ocean.

Vortex were third – a week after GG, with just the disk and a compliments slip. Acceptable...

Telecomsoft (Microprose, to be exact) came in fourth and fifth place over two weeks later with a letter stating that I personally had damaged the software and would have to pay £5.00 for the replacement service that I required. I reluctantly wrote a cheque and am now waiting for a reply. I only hope that the aforementioned get a grip on themselves for their own benefit and that of the consumer.

P. Biancheri, London.

Frankly, we were amazed at the response by all the people you contacted. Two weeks isn't a bad response time in most consumer areas (don't you watch That's Life? Some people wait years!). In fact, considering the workload Microprose now have with no less than five new labels to support (Microstyle, Microstatus, Rainbird, Silverbird, and Firebird) we reckon two weeks is pretty good. As for the £5.00, it does seem a bit tough. However, you say in your letter that more than

one of your game disks has corrupted. Are you sure you don't have a dodgy drive?

CONSOLE WAR

As the hand-held console war heats up between Nintendo's 'bog-standard' Gameboy and Atari's all-singing, all-dancing colour offering, the situation as it stands seems suspiciously familiar. Doesn't this in some way remind you of several previous battle fought in computing history? How about:

1. Spectrum vs C64
2. ST vs. Amiga
3. Nintendo vs. Sega

There you have three cases of technically superior machines losing out to marketing muscle. Now although none of these compare with something like the killing of Betamax by VHS, they all illustrate the fact that money makes a machine, not specification. Looking at the above examples, it seems that Commodore are a notable victim of marketing mistakes, with Nintendo riding high selling their converted shoe-boxes like hot cakes. Doesn't it make you sick? Now, I'm not slamming the Spectrum of ST (honestly) or the Nintendo (well...) but you've GOT to admit that, on paper, they all lose out – in the marketplace, though, they didn't.

OLD GAMES NEVER DIE

Here's a desperate plea from an ex-Spectrum turned Atari ST owner. Is it possible that conversions of such Speccy classics such as The Lords of Midnight trilogy, Skooldaze, Tir-Na-Nog and countless others may eventually surface as conversions on the ST?

It may seem backward to do this, but couldn't either exact or updated versions be released on PD or compilations? Hardly a day goes by without me pining over Dun Darach or The Hobbit. I'm sure the software houses could make plenty of extra dosh from it.

Nick Peers, Powys

We're with you all the way on this one, Nick. There are some games (not many, but you've certainly pinpointed a couple) who's magic never dies (cue romantic violin sounds). Software houses should really get their act together on this. We checked with Microprose, who now own the rights to the Lords of Midnight trilogy, but they say that programmer Mike Singleton is currently too busy to do the conversions. We'll press ahead with this campaign and keep readers informed as to the results...Personally I'd travel several miles for a good 16-bit PacMan at £9.99.

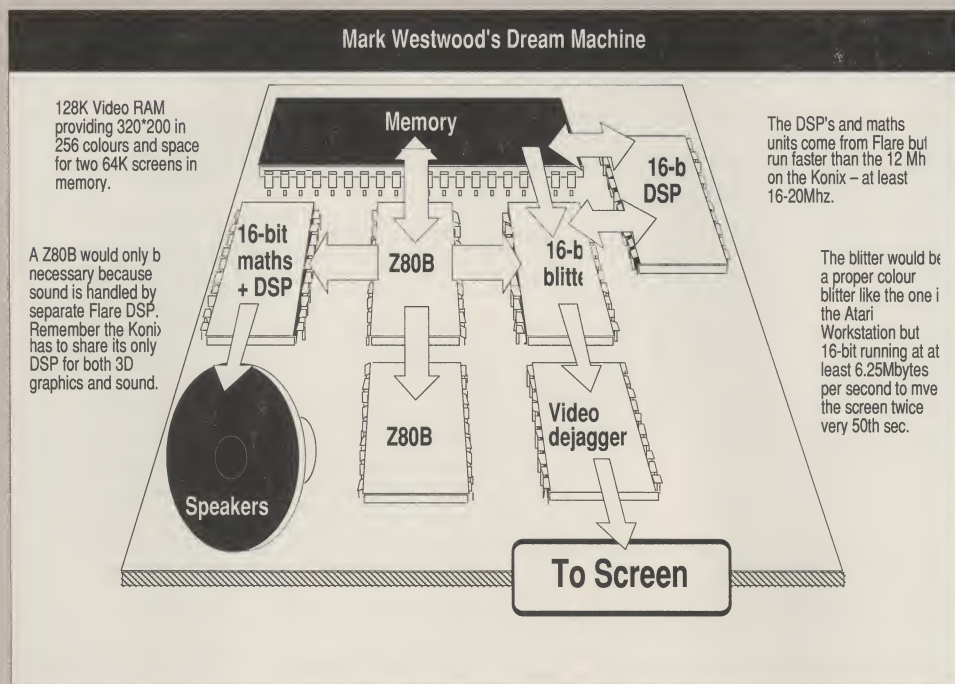


ACE CHALLENGED

Having studied your ideas and specs for a games machine of the 90's which you hope the industry will produce, I would like to add my comments, ideas, and constructive criticism.

First, your tech spec seems impractical: it's not just the complexity of your machine, it's the cost as well. Your machine has 1Mb of RAM, two 32-bit processors, disk drive etc. A machine like this would be hard pushed to squeeze in at under a grand at current costs – although I do agree about the de-jagger chip to get the maximum out of the PAL TV standard

Here's my tech spec:



Clearly this machine can be realistically built within a short time span – most of the technology is there.

As for price, well, if you compare it with the Multi-System (about £220), it looks more expensive because it has an extra DSP and is more sophisticated. It also runs faster, but chips are usually cheap – it's RAM that costs the money. The Multi-System has more RAM, complex control mechanisms, an 8086 16-bit central processor which is almost redundant on the system anyway, and an 880k drive built in.

My system would be credit card style operated – these can currently hold 2 megabytes. A large card socket would allow for future 4-8Mbyte games. The machine would be priced at between £150-250, and future add-ons would include a yoke-style controller like the Konix and a CD-ROM interface as on the PC Engine.

The casing design would be a sleek box like the MegaDrive – Wyn Holloway of Konix said the MegaDrive is a '...great games machine, but it's just a box.' I would say the MultiSystem is a great games machine but it is a toilet seat!

Mark Westwood, Barnsley

Our intention in issuing the ACE Challenge was not to start a debate amongst users (who are the only people who's opinion really matters, surely?) about the hardware we're sold to play and program our games on. We certainly seem to be succeeding! However, with regard to Mark's suggestions, we would like to point out that the analogue control mechanism on the Konix is more important for gameplay than he suggests. Perhaps Flare have something to say about this?

Which brings us to Atari, Nintendo, and the impending hand-held war. And this is where it gets interesting. Both Nintendo AND Atari have in the past ended up marketing their products against a technically better machine and beating it (although the Amiga is now catching up) so how will this battle end?

Both these companies are big corporations and this is certainly the first time two giants of such size have had to compete against

each other. Looking at the two machines, it is blatantly obvious to anyone that the Atari stands head and shoulders above the Gameboy, so will this be a first? Will justice be done? Will we actually see the better machine win for a change?

Richard Heasman, Buntingford

The machines we buy certainly have more to do with marketing and other factors than with tech specs. However, you've missed

one vital element: quality of software. The reason Nintendo triumphed over Sega in Japan (and then elsewhere) was due as much to Super Mario Bros as it was to marketing skills. And the Gameboy has Super Marioland....

However, we agree that the Atari Lynx is by far the more interesting machine technically. Whether the software matches up or not remains to be seen. Check out our hand-helds article coming soon...

C64 IN AMIGA ROLE

Can you tell me if there is any way the C64 can run Amiga games – i.e. upgrading memory, or sending it somewhere to have it made compatible with any 16-bit machines?

Also, as a role-player, I disagree with the term Computer Role-Playing Games. An RPG is a game in which you use your imagination to create your surroundings, and in those surroundings you can do almost anything. Whereas in a CRPG you're enclosed by menus and icons and are limited in what you can do. Unless someone teaches a computer to understand English, it will never be role-playing, it will be a menu-driven graphic adventure. Another thing – in an RPG you have the chance to keep your character and get to know him/her as if they were real. I feel you can't do this in a CRPG.

Matthew Benson, Sanbach

As far as your first question goes, the answer is definitely no. You would need a different (16-bit 68000) processor, a whole host of support chips, and a different keyboard. In other words, you need an Amiga...It is sometimes possible to run games for 8-bit machines on 16-bit ones using software emulation (which makes the more powerful micro 'pretend' to be an 8-bit weakling) but the opportunities are limited and the results usually disappointing.

As for CRPG's, you can store your characters in most of these games and develop them over a long period. In some games (Bards Tale, Wizardry, and some Ultima games) you can even transport the characters into different games from different publishers. CRPG's are developing very fast, so I wouldn't write them off just yet.

11-PLUS QUESTION

In the special twenty-fourth issue of ACE, which is usually a splendid read, the reason given for the pathetically small Adventure and Helpline sections is shortage of space. The completely ordinary twenty-third issue had twenty-four more pages. Discuss.

Phil Armstrong, Gateshead

Ahem. Yes, there were some delays in re-building the adventure section, but I don't think you'll be complaining from now on – five glorious pages in this

month's issue – and more to come every month in future.

Magazines are printed in 'sections' and the size varies during the production cycle, so that you sometimes find a section either increasing in size or decreasing after various articles have been written. This can result in pages being either inserted or removed from sections at short notice prior to printing. Most of the time you wouldn't notice, but then you would be a clever dick, wouldn't you?!

CRASH LANDING

Your 'Learn to Fly' competition in the October issue caught my attention, especially the picture of the aeroplane on the cover.

Being the Editor of a magazine relating to this type of aircraft, I hope that the prize won't be in this North American SNJ-5 (The SNJ was the US Navy version of the famous Harvard trainer) because for £600 you will only have an hour and fifteen minutes flying time!

As to the point of your typesetting and proof-reading, I think the readers should know that it takes a lot of time and work to produce a magazine and however hard you check the print, the odd mistake is always bound to creep in.

One word though, in the Konix article you state: 'Push the controller forward and your craft rises, push the controller towards you and the craft descends...'

I don't know what you are trying to fly, but when I do go flying, pushing the stick forward lowers the nose the plane, and pulling back raises it.

M.J.Pengelly, Cornwall

Ooops! No wonder we kept digging holes at the end of the runway! A classic ACE boo-boo, indeed. As for the typos, we're still taking on more staff and each issue gets better as we get more time, but in the meantime thank you everyone for your patience.

CYNIC

After reading J.J.Boggis' letter concerning the linking of two computers for head-to-head games, I decided to try out a similar scheme with a friend of mine.

Anyhow, I bought the necessary 48 miles of connecting cable, and bound that by winding the cable around 24 miles of telephone wires connecting our houses, we could have a fun – if slight-

SNIPPETS

Why can I only fit 23 copies into two binders?

Dave Brown, BFPO8

It's not that the binders are thin, it's that the mag's are so thick!

I have got every issue of ACE since number one, but what happened to issue Number 25, October 89? I checked the shops every weekend in Bristol but no-one had it. Can you please send me details on how to get a copy?

K.Bartlett, Bristol

I'm afraid a printer's error resulted in a shortfall of copies for this issue, and as a result it sold out. For this issue and others since October '87 you can order back-copies from ACE Back Issues Dept, POB 500, Leicester, LE99 0AA. Each issue will set you back £1.50 (postage included).

ly slow – game of professional dominoes. Unfortunately nothing else worked.

By the way, readers interested in this scheme should note that the necessary cable costs only £795 (ex VAT), although the protective outer cable is extra.

I'm now considering purchasing a similar cable for a joystick extension in order to cut out the annoyance of having to walk all the way to his house to play Gauntlet II – there's a catch in this somewhere, but I can't think what it is.

Richard Head, Heathdon

There's always a cynic somewhere.

DOG HOUSE

Once again, my wife and I are not talking. How does this concern ACE, you may well ask...

Picture the scenario (I dreamt up a ludicrously bizarre game description to protect the guilty):

Having had a pretty naff day in the mundane world of commercial mainframe programming, I return home to unwind over a gentle game on my Amiga and things are going well – Dido the Dodo has blasted, snorkelled, and ballooned his way through various levels of The Mauritius Story and has rescued seven of his extinct but well-preserved comrades from the clutches of Wally, the caretaker of the British Museum.

He is just reaching the end of Level 2-4 to face the giant and deadly hamster-spewing 'super prawn' end-of-level guardian with all three of his lives intact when in walks my wife to ask me how many baked beans I want for my tea. Eight seconds and three lives later and it's all over – the wife gets a volley of verbal abuse, plus

several items of assorted hardware hurled at her, and I face the prospect of a silent evening and the same boring levels I've played several dozen times before.

Now I for one have the greatest respect for the pimply programmers who come up with these games in between doing the paper round and studying for their 11-plus but why do they ignore the most fundamental aspect of program design: user friendliness? In the case of a game that means the likelihood (or not) of its driving its player to distraction within ten minutes of it being opened.

Surely it is so easy to include a password system to allow access to the latest uncompleted level (or screen) of a game to allow play to continue (if desired) from that point, rather than forcing the hapless player to endure for the hundredth time having to play rounds that were long since mastered and no longer hold any challenge.

M.J.Crawley, Saltdean

This is being done by more and more programmers, but let's see more of it, eh, lads?

READY AND WAITING

I'd like to have a last word on the subject of games difficulty, which I first broached in my Prize Letter in the September issue. It is not that I am unable to complete games. For instance, I like some Psynosis games. These are fun because each one has an interesting world to explore, peopled with brilliantly drawn aliens or monsters, and I have completed Brattacus, Barbarian, Obliterator, and Baal without the aid of cheats.

It is just that I dislike games,

whether arcade or adventure, which seem boringly difficult for their own sake, and I do not share the sense of macho challenge which excites Jim Laver – although I notice that even he uses the Adventure Helpline, so his principles cannot be as unyielding as he makes out. For me, life and work has enough challenges as it is, without inventing more.

Since it is rarely possible to try games before buying, it is all too easy nowadays to pay out one's £20 or so and find that the only outcome is a lot of boring, repetitive hassle without any sense of interest or fun, such as mapping mazes, pondering for hours on bizarre puzzles, banging away mindlessly on the fire button, or moving sprites around monotonous landscapes, as in Infocom's Battletech, which I recently made the mistake of buying.

I disagree that all games must take the form of a challenge thrown down by the programmer, and I prefer the idea of exploratory hypergames mentioned in an article on the September issue. Jim Laver is right. I have given up, in the sense that I buy far fewer games than I might buy if I could obtain more entertainment from them. The money is waiting in my pocket if only the games industry would provide what I want.

Alan Hughes, Milton Keynes

CONSOLE CRITIQUE

I hear so much about the so-called 'console revolution' that is supposed to have occurred, yet still the computer is by far the more popular instrument. My personal view of the console is that for most people it is a waste of money.

What can be done by a console that cannot be done by a computer? Sound and graphics standards are easily matched by 16-bit games. And if you cannot afford a 16-bit machine just by an 8-bit one! The Commodore 64 is relatively cheap at around £150, and has a vastly superior range of software at much cheaper prices than any console, and, due to the 'closed shop' approach used by console manufacturers, this is likely to remain so.

Ian A. Inman, Stanley

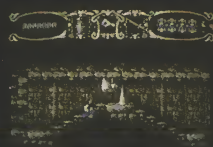
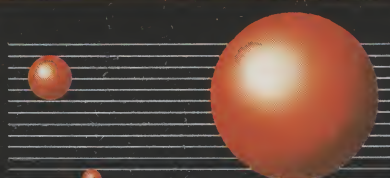
Well, there's an idea – and one that Commodore would be delighted to support! However, I think you're underestimating the power of some of today's consoles.



Mami

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Actual C.64 Screenshots



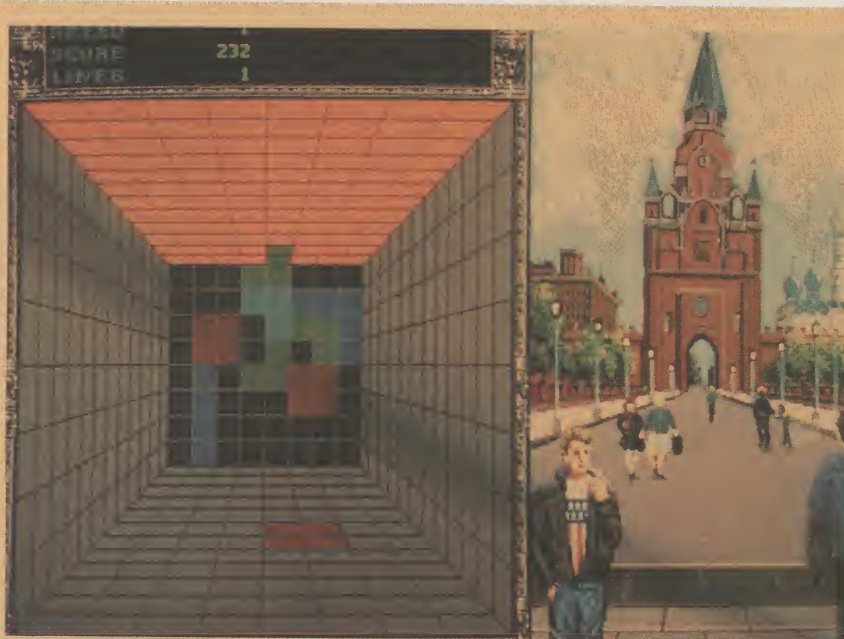
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BEYOND TETRIS

OLD GROPER TAKES A CHEAP DAY RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO AND COMES BACK WITH A HANDFUL OF GOODIES.



It's a bit difficult for us, here in the UK, to understand what a phenomena *Tetris* has become in the rest of the world. The game that was first published here was successful here, sure, but despite receiving astonishing critical acclaim, didn't seem to get to the punters in quite the same way. But it sure as hell did everywhere else.

Sitting on the tube in Chicago I tell a guy I'm into computer games - he asks me if I've ever played this great game all the people are playing in his office. It's called *Tetris*.

Walking into a store, there's the Nintendo Gameboy on sale - being swooped upon by eager consumers. It's got *Tetris* bundled with it.

At the recent arcade show, I'm told that the arcade version of *Tetris* as sold about 24,000 units. At, say, \$600-800 a time, that's a lot of bazooma, John.

But surely such phenomenal success has to be a one-off, the cynics say to anyone that will listen. I feel I have to tell the assembled company, I think not. The Russian guy that came up with the original has just done it again, with a game called *Welltris*.

Why? 'Cause it's *Tetris*, but played as if you're looking down a well (see screenshot). Shapes can be moved around all four sides of the well as they fall down, (unless a particular face is "locked") and you can still rotate shapes along the axes of the plane of the well.

When the shapes hit the bottom of the well, they keep moving towards the centre of the screen and the idea of the game is still to make unbroken

lines across the bottom of the well, which then disappear, etc, etc.

You loose when all four sides of the well are locked - which happen when a bit of a shape cannot fall down completely into the bottom section of the well.

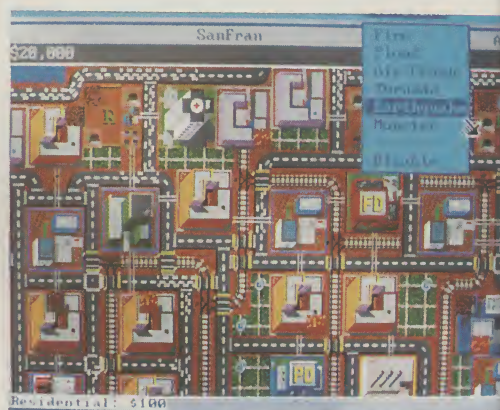
Simple enough, but is it any good. Blimey chief, so it is. Admittedly I was supremely wonderful at the original game, but I had to be dragged away from the test machine at Spectrum Holobyte, kicking and screaming for another - just one more - go.

Contemplating life separate from the furlined corporate straight-jacket of Maxwell Communications, there is no doubt that *Welltris* is going to do the future prospects of the company (still headed up by Phil "Third baseman" Adam and Gillman "I talk in Op-code" Louie) absolutely no harm whatsoever. And maybe Pasytov - the guy that keeps coming up with the ideas - might just get a Peristroke bonus in the wage packet next month. But I wonder who'll be picking up the European rights, so you and me can start playing over here?



PCS FOR PLEASURE

In case you didn't know it, the IBM PC is probably the best domestic computer for playing games. Ah, before the knives start coming out, maybe I should qualify that - a VGA 386 system is the best domestic computer for playing com-



With cities like this to simulate, why doesn't everyone own 386 PC's?

puter games. Fast as you like, 256 colours, give me a 24 Meg 386 every day of the week, particularly with a Roland sound board plugged in the back. Give me the £3500 to buy the mother with as well please.

But there's no doubt that the PC is now, at last, being taken seriously on both sides of the Atlantic as a game machine. In the USA, of course, it accounts for over half of the non-Nintendo entertainment software sales, whereas the ST hardly gets a look in, with the Amiga coming well down the scale. However, it looks as if PC gamers are coming out of the closet in the UK too - with some jolly good stuff to look forward to as well.

First and foremost, the latest craze in the States - *Sim City*. Already given rave, rave reviews in the European press, almost before



Choose from 8 scenarios in PC *Sim City* - but perhaps the San Francisco earthquake option is no longer in the best of taste.

Infogramme (the European licensees) had heard about it itself, *Sim City* is very much a phenomena over there, with national coverage - making Maxis Software's Jeff Braun a very happy man indeed.

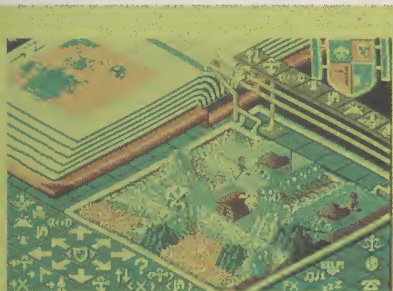
Like *Tetris* before it, *Sim City* was turned down by many a software house, with author Will Wright leaving his job at Broderbund to finish the game, before he found it a home at Maxis. Now it's received the ultimate expression of wonderfulness - with the Nintendo Corp buying the rights to publish it on the Nintendo themselves. Details of the amount of dosh changing hands on the deal are, of course, confidential - but I bet it's more than you or me could usefully eat in a month. And to think it was once turned down because of being - in the opinion of one suit - "un-Nintendoable". Funny old world, isn't it?

Another PC must is going to be *PC Dungeon Master* - in the final stages of testing now. Looking exactly like, if not better than, the originals, FTL can expect to be highly praised for the program by a whole new community of users. They'll probably make it on News at Ten, too - for causing more damage to the data and productivity of PC users than the "Friday the 13th" virus.

After all these share price scares, the average PC owning yuppie will be wanting to get rid of some of that pent-up aggression, and EA's *Budokan* will probably satisfy. A martial arts bask with a bit more authenticity than usual, you can have a go at Karate, Kendo, Bo or Nunchuku, then gut beaten up by guys that have trained in other disciplines, like Ninjitsu.



Just a quick glimpse of *Budokan* on PC VGA - coming soon from Electronic Arts.



PC owners can now get all religious, mystical and altogether other-worldly - no we're not talking about going the way of the Maharishi, but putting *Populous* up on the company PC. Just as completely wonderful on this format as on any other, the only question mark is over whether the lack of mouse changes the gameplay.

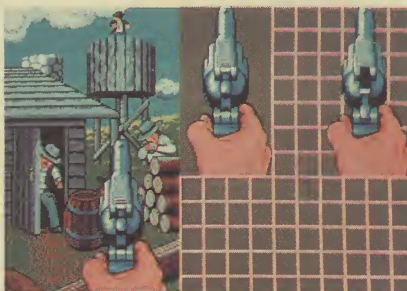
LEVEL 9 GET HUGE

The adventure stalwarts at Level 9 caused something of a minor stir at the recent PC Show - by announcing that *Scapeghost*, the latest release from that company, was going to be their last. Their last adventure, that is. No, from now on, Level 9 will be producing games under a new game authoring system, called H.U.G.E. Cringe warning - it stands for wHoly Universal Games Engine. Oooerrr.

Tracking the Austins down to their new Southampton hideout proved worthwhile, as they revealed some of the power of the system that's taken anything from 7 to 10 person years of programming to produce - depending on which of them you speak to and how much they've had to drink at the time. But I'll tell you this, it's impressive.

The Austins have turned the problem of writing for multiple formats on its head. Instead of writing separately for each machine, they've developed a language for writing games, any games, in a high level format, with separate compilers for each machine type.

This means they can do neat party tricks, like making a change to an animation sequence on the ST - taking the changed data and compiling this straight



The graphics in the **HUGE** games are a lot better than L9's previous efforts.



Level 9 - abandoning adventures but still typical English eccentrics...



away and running it on, say, an IBM or Amiga - with the alteration working on the other machines instantly. This is the developers' equivalent of the Philosophers' Stone.

To make things even more interesting, the system seems to out perform most of the usual ways of programming games to boot, in terms of the amount and speed of animation - and if extra, super speed is needed, code segments can be nested into the framework without problems, they say.

With plans for original games (see screen shots), conversions and tie-ins on the cards, it's not surprising that big firms like Cinemaware are taking a strong interest in H.U.G.E. and Level 9. Watch that, presumably **HUGE**, space.



Ah, the life of a British Gentleman abroad...

***Pretty As A Picture,
Mean As The Devil.***

**Weird things happen...
The slime is on the rise.
The Titanic has arrived.
And after 300 years, Vigo
the Carpathian won't
stay dead.**

Who you gonna call?

**Get your bustin' business
back on its feet. Hit the
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Ectomobile. Go
underground to discover
a river of slime...and rise
above it all with the
Statue of Liberty. All to
turn evil to good and
defeat Vigo at the
Museum of Art.**

**Action, adventure,
strategy challenges —
and great laughs.
Ghostbusters II.**

THEY'R



ATARI ST SCREEN SHOWN



GHSTBUSTERS™ II

RE BACK!

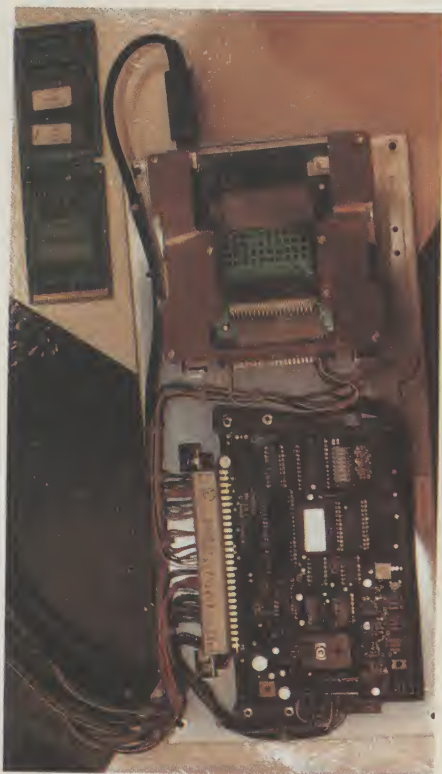


 **ACTIVISION**

COIN-OP ENGINE

JOHN COOK DISCOVERS A PC ENGINE IN THE ARCADES

In a move that mildly gobs-macked a mildly depressed trade attending the recent AMOA Show in Las Vegas, a US firm, United Amusements, announced a shock tie-up with NEC, the makers of the PC Engine games console.



▲ PC Engine PCB

▼ S.T.U.N. Runner

Renamed the Turbo Grafx-16 Stateside (tumbles all round in the NEC marketing Dept for that one), it will now turn up where we all expected it least, in the arcades!

Why unexpected? Well simply, the US arcade operators view the advance of the domestic game consoles with the same relish the Polish cavalry viewed the average Blitzkrieg. Standing firm, but keeping the dry cleaners in brisk business, the operators are blaming their lowered incomes of the mega success of the Nintendo system (over 20 million units in the US now) – and the thought of a higher specced system coming through is not making them happy. Or wasn't until now.

What United have done is make a version of the PC Engine on a PCB that is compatible with JAMMA cabinets. The difference is that to change the game running on the system, what you do is just change the special ROM cartridge with the game data on it (and no, it's not directly compatible with the home console!) and there you have it – a new game.

And the price? After you've invested in the kit, a new game will cost the operator anything from \$50 to \$200. Compare that to \$800 for a new PCB.

Cheap – and that is what the operators are getting so excited about. NEC are pretty hoopy about it as well. The system blows the Nintendo Playchoice 10 system out of the water – which won't do them any harm in the uphill struggle to defeat the Big N in the home market – and also gives NEC a great showcase for displaying new PC Engine software. They intend placing enhanced versions of the new games on the arcade version (enhanced



X-Multiply

because you can have up to 4 Meg of data on the arcade cards) – with adverts saying, “coming to your PC Engine soon!!!”

Having playtested a few games on show in Las Vegas, I can personally vouch that *Gunhead* played on a 26" monitor with an industrial strength joystick is even more fun than playing it on the home unit.

The trade loves it, the public will love it – expect to see a lot of this in the near future.

THIS MONTH'S GAMES – LIVE FROM LAS VEGAS

1989 AMOA – the big show of the year for the arcade industry – was this year slightly of colour, as it has been repositioned two weeks before the main Japanese trade show....so naturally many of the Japanese firms were holding a little bit back for then.

But with an estimated \$3.1 Billion slipping into the American video coin-slots plus another \$2.37 Billion being spent by pinball junkies, the show was still well attended and very much a global event.

Sega had its new communication unit that goes between *Super Monaco Grand Prix* units. Yes funsters, multi-player SMGP. We must have done something very good in a past life to deserve this treat – it's now simply the best multi-player driving game in the galaxy. Hopefully we'll see that making its way over here very, very soon.

As well as showing a new PCB game *ESWAT*, Sega also had a great new golf game for its System 24 cabinet – *Super Masters*. Another best for Sega – another winner.

Atari Games lead with a new filled poly game – *S.T.U.N. Runner*. Heavy on the fab 3D, light on the gameplay – or so the first impression seemed. Namco had another link-up game based on racing quad



SPREAD THAT JAMMA

More Coin-op jargon explained – this month we're talking about serious hardware

Look into the classified pages of any arcade trade magazine and you'll see pages and pages of new and second-hand PCB's for sale. PCB's? What the hell are they?

Well, PCB stands for Printed Circuit Board, so you might guess that we are talking about serious electronics here – and you'd be dead right.

In the home sector, games software comes on floppy disc and you load the data on the disc into the RAM of a standard hardware unit in order to play. In the arcade business you buy the computer and software hardwired onto a single circuit board that you slot into a standard Cabinet. It's this board that is referred to as the PCB. But what's a Cabinet, I hear you cry?

Simply, it's a shell unit consisting of everything that you need to run a coin-op, apart from the PCB – the box itself, joysticks, fire buttons, monitor and loudspeaker.

The idea is that an operator will buy cabinet separately from the boards, the PCB's – and simply change that board when he/she decides a game is not bringing in enough money – the cabinet remains.

The particularly perceptive reader will realise that for boards and cabinets to be interchangeable with each other, a certain amount of standardisation will have had to take place as far as input/output protocol from board to cabinet goes – and so it has. In a surprising bit of sanity, in the early days of the industry, such a standard was agreed on by the manufacturers and it's referred to as JAMMA compatibility, named after the Japanese trade association that thought it up.

So long as your PCB is JAMMA compatible, you can plug it into any JAMMA compatible cabinet (they all are) and boogie on down straight away.

Now, ever heard of a coin-op being referred to as Dedicated? What can this mean? Are the electrons whizzing around the circuits of such a game particularly dedicated to the cause of coin-ops? The sort that wouldn't be seen charged up anywhere near a washing machine, for example. Or do you have to be a particularly hardened arcade head banger to tackle such a Dedicated game?

Nope – all it means is that the unit in question has a control system on the cabinet and/or other features on the PCB that make it non-JAMMA compatible – so you couldn't take a normal PCB and plug it into that system.

For example, take *Operation Wolf*. The control system here is a gun – not the usual joystick and two fire buttons. You wouldn't be able to plug say, *Strider*, into this one – it wouldn't work. Likewise most of the games that throw you around – driving games and so on; these are all dedicated units.

In the trade these are recognised as usually being superior games, but are viewed as high risk ventures, as they cost more (you have to effectively buy the specialised cabinet along with the PCB hardware) and you can't change over boards to make it into another game. Most arcades will have one or two dedicated at the front of the shop as showpieces to draw the punters into the place, however.

Occasionally, if a particular Dedicated has been very popular – *Gauntlet* for instance – someone will release a conversion kit for it. This, as you might expect, is a piece of hardware that replaces the original PCB, but utilises the non-standard control system of the original specialised cabinet.



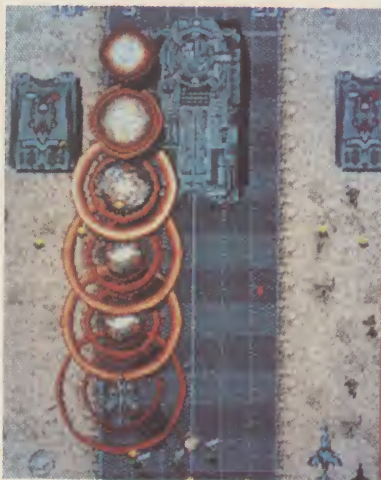
Task Force Harrier

bikes which was fun, but not up to the standard of *Final Lap*. Expect another poly game from them soon, however.

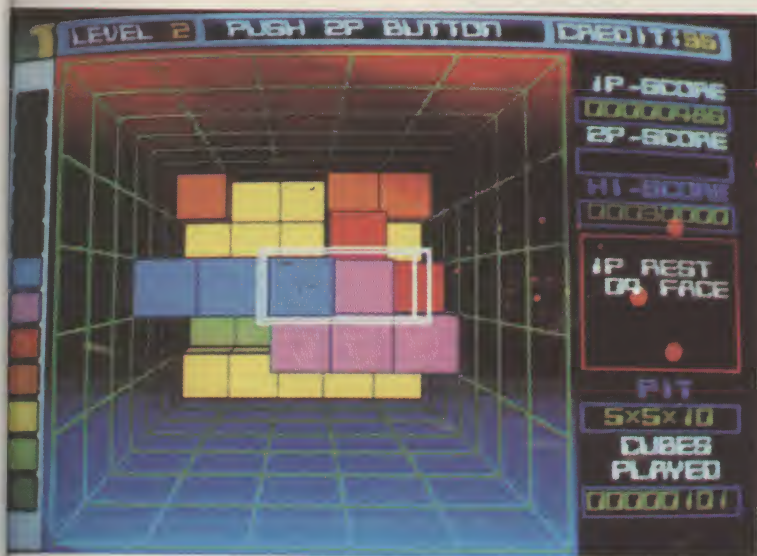
Disappointment of the show – Capcom wasting the genius of its new hardware on garbage concepts like *UN Squadron*. Huge sprites, loadsa colours, hardly worth going beyond the attract screen as the banality of this horizontal scroller unfolds. Surely better is on the way?

Racing games are in – and Jaleco has invested a lot of money in *Big Run*, a rally game based on the Paris to Dakar rally. Fun, if a little uninspired.

Data East might have a winner on its hands with *Midnight Resistance*. A good jumpy-jumpy come shooter,



Task Force Harrier



Block Out

it's doing very well on test in the UK and well worth a try.

Best Pinball of the show has to be Data East's *ABC Monday Night Football*. Licensing the American Football equivalent of Match of the Day – the table is a dream to play and breaks a spell of mediocre releases from that

section of the Data East mega-corp.

Best PCB of the Show – *Task Force Harrier* – another one for the autofire head bangers from the makers of *Omega Force*. Or was it *X-Multiply* from Irem?

Lastly – most unexpected success of the show was had by American Technos with a true

3-D Tetris variant, *Block Out*. Rotating shapes in the x, y and z axes makes me wish I'd paid more attention in Crystallography. Brain hurts Mum. See you next month with news from the big UK autumn show, the Associated Leisure Preview.

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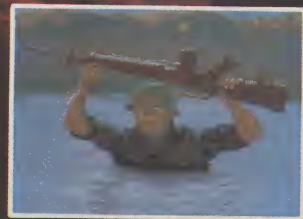


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ATARI ST

GOING TO TOWN...

Fujitsu's 32-bit FM Towns is setting Japan alight with its combination of raw processing power and CD-ROM drive. ACE brings you the specs, the software story, and a prayer that someone will bring you the machine...!

More than half a year has passed since Fujitsu's brand new computer, the FM TOWNS, made its début in Japan. It was first unveiled at a computer show in Tokyo in January where it caused a sensation amongst trade and public alike. It wasn't just the 32-bit performance or the hi-res graphics and sound that got people talking either – what really raised the adrenalin levels was the built-in CD-ROM, supplied as standard with the machine.

Although Fujitsu isn't that well-known in Britain, they've in fact been very active in the Japanese home market for some time, so the FM Towns didn't come as complete surprise. The company have a reputation for bringing out interesting micros ranging from the highly regarded (in Japan) FM-7 to the more recent FM-77 AV – a very colourful little beast with high graphic and sound specifications. The FM Towns is therefore part of a continuing series of hardware releases and not just a one-off.

MEGA-DISK

The CD-ROM that comes with the machine has some obvious advantages, but there are some less obvious ones as well. To start with, you get the vast capacity of an optical disk (up to 540Mb in the case of the Towns unit). This means that very few games require more than one disk (astonishingly, there are some that do!) so despite the higher cost of individual CDR disks, software can sometimes work out cheaper. Furthermore, the disks are far more reliable and, being ROM, you cannot, of course, delete any files by mistake or write over them. Finally, the disks are almost indestructible in normal use, so you don't have to pussy foot around the bedroom any more trying to go to trample on your carefully scattered



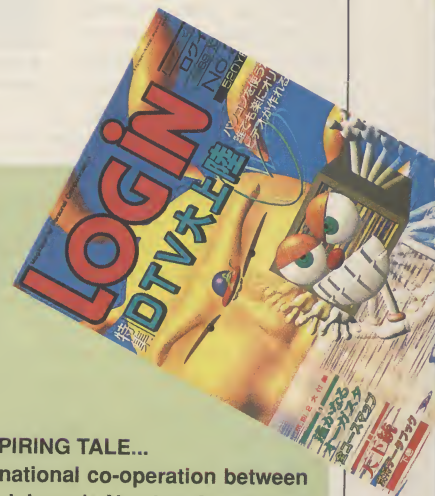
Evolution, a stunning 3D adventure that shows off the Town's powerful graphics processor and colour handling capabilities.

diskettes. In fact, having a CD-ROM is a bit like having a vast capacity cartridge system, except its cheaper (cartridges carrying 1Mbyte are under development but currently cost hundreds of pounds).

POWER ON TAP

The Towns boasts a 32-bit 80386 CPU. This makes it as fast as the latest PC-compatible 386 machines (and a lot faster than some of them). It makes the current ST and Amiga performance look pretty sick in operation and games like *AfterBurner*, which on the Towns uses a hefty wodge of colour and sound, really show the results. The other advantage of the 386 is that it can directly address (i.e. refer to) more memory than a 16-bit chip, though in practise most games do not load that much data into memory anyway (assuming you've got the memory installed – the FMT comes with 1Mbyte on the entry level machine, 2Mbyte on the more expensive model – see the Specs box on page 29).

However 'power' isn't all about chips and disk capacity. What really makes the Towns attractive is the way everything works together



AN INSPIRING TALE...

of international co-operation between ACE and Japan's Number One games magazine, *Login*, brought you this report. Here at ACE we'd like to say a big thanks to *Login*, and especially to Akihiko Yabu and Masato Niizike for all their help. We hope to bring you more joint reports like this in future, giving you the low-down on the exciting Japanese market. Meanwhile, all our best wishes to the *Login* team...and a large bottle of the best Scotch!

– when you get CD-ROM AND 32-bit technology hand in hand you get some stunning displays and sounds. This is particularly true of the latter as the CDR disk storage medium is really the only way to provide the memory needed for high-quality (16-bit) sound samples. You can pack *Tetris*, a stunning series of digitised backgrounds, and fully digitised stereo sound of CD-quality onto the CDR – something you simply couldn't do on a conventional system.

The graphics chip in the Towns is no weakling either. It offers very effective sprite and scroll functions – essential for making certain game categories (particularly shoot-em-ups) really impressive.



Afterburner goes to Towns...

PERIPHERALS

The Towns is very much a WIMP (Windows, Icons, Mice, Pointers) machine. In fact, the operating system designed by Fujitsu takes the machine so far in this direction that a keyboard is not standard equipment. Almost all the software, including the OS, is mouse-driven and requires nothing more than menu selection and clicking to operate.

Keyboards are only necessary for word processing and other text intensive operations. The main advantage of this for gamers is that it reduces the cost of the basic package – it also underlines the fact that Fujitsu regard the machine primarily as an entertainment micro. If only Commodore and Atari had taken this attitude from day one!

There are two types of CRT monitor available from Fujitsu, one costing 89,800 yen (£399) and the other 138,000 yen (£610) depending on resolution. However, the Towns has proved so popular in Japan that there are already many third parties producing monitors, memory and other widgets to go with the machine. You will soon be able to lash out on an 80387 co-processor (great for speeding up the old 3D routines), a 1Mb expansion memory, a video card, a modem card, and a SCSI card (for communicating with other standard peripherals) to name only a few. At the moment however, most of these peripherals are still under development as the machine has not been widely available for long enough.

One slightly odd peripheral, you might think, is System Sacom's 45 Mb HD drive and 5.25 FD drive. Why, after all, should you need a hard disk or floppy when you've got that whopping great CD-ROM? Apart from storage, the main reason for games players is that the CD-ROM has one major disadvantage – it offers relatively slow access speed to data on the disc compared to HD or FD. For business users, this can be critical when working with applications that constantly access a lot of data. It's also bad news for some games that require frequent disk access.

PARLEZ VOUS KANJI?

Any Japanese company has a big handicap compared with those in English-speaking countries. In Japan, a machine has, naturally



Afterburner again. Just look at those colours.

enough, got to cope with the Japanese language, the most complex written system in the world with more than 5,000 characters. This naturally results in a need for larger RAM and storage devices. In this sense, the FM Towns has got an edge over its rivals, having plenty of memory and a large ROM which includes a Japanese dictionary in it. This is certainly contributing to the popularity of the machine in Japan, – the Macintosh, for example, though highly respected, was rarely purchased by Japanese until recently when the Japanese script system was implemented. It is now one of the most popular machines in the country.

Finally, the price of the Towns makes it a clear winner with the Japanese. Although expensive by UK standards at over £1500, it competes in the market with machines that would normally cost at least three times as much. After some debate, Fujitsu eventually priced it at 338,000 yen (£1500) for model-1, with one FD drive, and 398,000 yen (£1770) for model-2, with two FD drives.

THE SOFTWARE

The FM TOWNS comes with a very well designed operating system. As stated above,

you can do everything simply by selecting from a pull-down menu and double-clicking the command you want. You are totally free from complex commands like DIR or FILES. But what about the games...and are we going to see it over here in the UK?

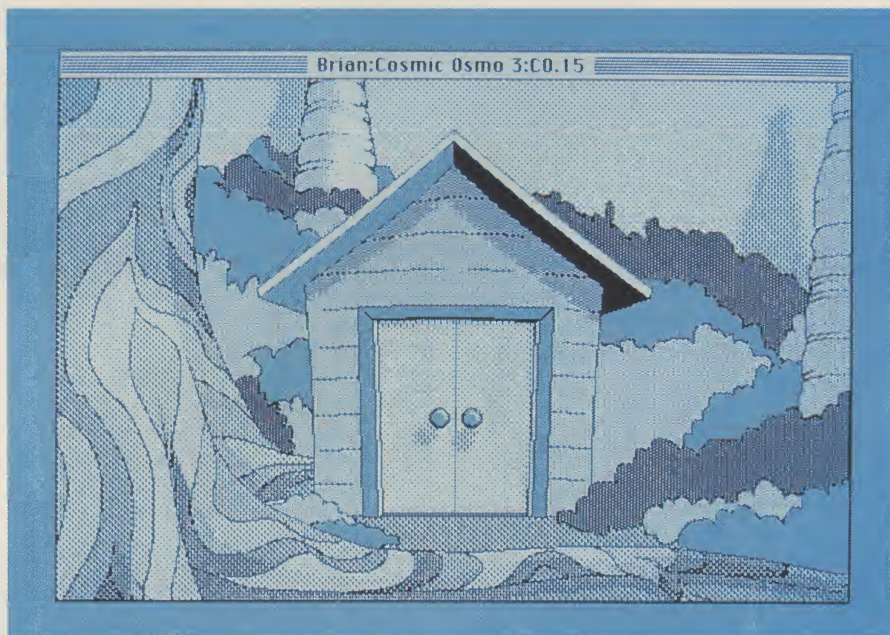
Original software is currently being released both in Japan and the States for the machine while many other successful titles on other formats are being converted. In the



New Zealand Story.

States, the FM Towns Support Centre, fully supported by Fujitsu, was established in May and works to improve co-operation with software developers. This is particularly important since in order to develop a software under new technology, such as CD-ROM, programmers have to share their knowledge as much as possible.

Information gathered by the Support Centre will be available via CompuServe for developers who support the Centre in return. This open access means that it is by no means impractical for British software houses to support the machine should they wish to. At the moment, however, although both Mirrorsoft and Acorn (who have a machine) appear to be interested, it is unlikely that anyone will bring out games unless we see the Towns sold over here.



Readers who checked out our Hypergames feature on *Cosmic Osmo* in a recent edition of ACE will know that this new game-style could prove very popular in future. Hypergames use a vast number of linked graphic scenes together with animation sequences to offer the player a whole visual environment to explore at will. This sort of game is an excellent candidate for CD-ROM technology, so it's significant that the only official programming language currently available for the Towns is 'Towns Gear'. This is a HyperCard-like programming environment that could be used to create *Osmo* or *Manhole*-type games using the CD-ROM. *Manhole* is already on CD-ROM for the Mac, so a Towns version could follow soon...

FM POWER...

Microprocessor:	80386 (32bit)
RAM:	model-1: 1Mbytes model-2: 2Mbytes
VRAM:	512K
Sprite RAM:	128K
Internal drives:	model-1: CD-ROM (540Mbytes x 1) model-2: CD-ROM (540Mbytes x 1) FD (1.2Mbytes x 2)
Graphic mode (dots):	640 x 480: 256 out of 16,770,000 colours 640 x 480: 16 out of 4,096 colours / 2 screens 320 x 240: 32,768 colours / 2 screens 640 x 400: 16 out of 4,096 colours / 2 screens
Sound:	PCM sounds: stereo 8-channel FM sounds: stereo 6-channel sampling: 8 bit, 19.2 Hz CD-ROM works as an ordinary CD player
Size:	328mm x 150mm x 400mm
Weight:	11 kg
Optional devices:	Key board 80387 processor expansion memory video card modem card SCSI card 14" display



The only good news here is that a successful American launch (which seems likely because of Fujitsu's commitment) means we should be able to see slightly cheaper grey imports and then, if the machine really catches on, an authorised version. The situation is slightly improved since the technology used in the Towns is, at the moment, pretty future-proof so it's not a case of 'If it's not out this year, it'll be too late..' Unfortunately, Fujitsu are adamant at present that the machine is for the domestic Japanese market only, but grey imports should be available as soon as production steps up.

Meanwhile, converted games include *After Burner*, *New Zealand Story* and several other

popular conversions. If you want a whopper, you could try 'Last Armageddon' which comprises no less than 3 CD-ROMs. Each disc is as much as 540 Mb so that makes 1.5 Gb altogether in an RPG *Ultima*-style romp.

At the moment, the FM Towns seems to be almost entirely game oriented. 90% of software is games only, 10% comprises paint/draw/music/communication tools. Though there are no business applications available, Fujitsu should soon change all that with an MS-DOS emulator that currently enables more than 30 business applications to run on the FM TOWNS. It includes the most popular Japanese word processor 'Ichitaro'



One of the advantages of the CD-ROM format is that it is identical with CD-Audio. This means you're FM Towns can not only play back conventional CD disks, but it can also, with appropriate software, use them as as sample sources for editing and manipulation.

and as well as more familiar programs like Lotus 1-2-3.

Fujitsu have already shipped around 20,000 units of the machine in Japan – a tiny number compared to the millions of MSX and Nintendo machines, but it's growing very rapidly. The main problem has been the speed of manufacture, rather than lack of demand, with most available models going into shops for demonstration. The company hope to be able to fulfill demand soon and we can then expect the software base to explode.

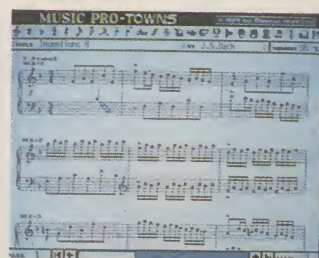
However, one problem at the moment does seem to be the marketing policy behind the machine. Fujitsu are claiming that the FM Towns will be a computer for everybody ranging from kids through housewives to business users. Compare this with the approach taken in Japan by Sharp a few years ago with their X68000 – clearly marketed as an Apple II-like and now very strongly supported.

Meanwhile, competition is shaping up with NEC announcing their own CD-ROM machine, the PC-8801 MC, an 8-bit personal computer with a CD-ROM drive as a standard equipment. The machine uses a PC-Engine CD-ROM unit and costs about two-thirds of the Towns machine, though the spec isn't as good.

There's no doubt that CD-ROM is the storage medium of the future. Let's hope the British market catches up soon with machines like the Towns, otherwise we may get left far behind in the race towards truly advanced computer entertainment.



Last Armageddon - 1.5 Gigabytes of RPG



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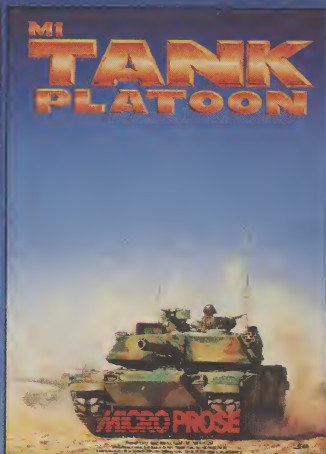
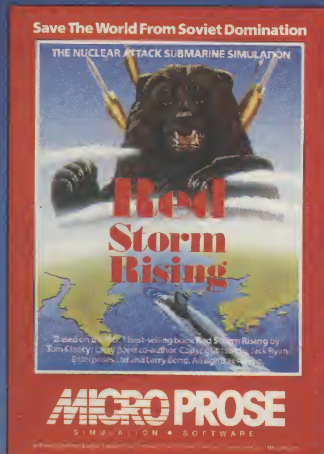
In the face of adversity, it is a brave heart and sharp mind that matters more than the technology behind the man.

The spirit of attack is all...

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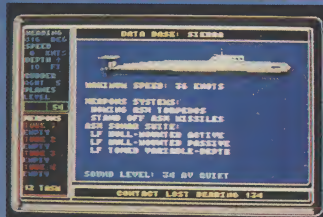
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WHAT'S THE SCORE?

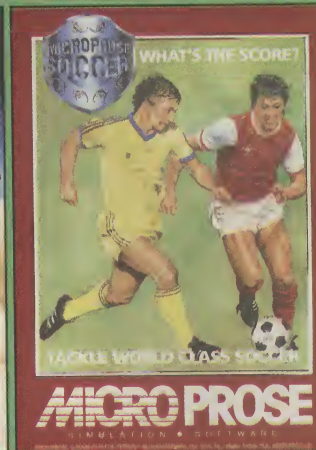
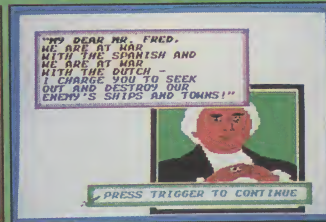
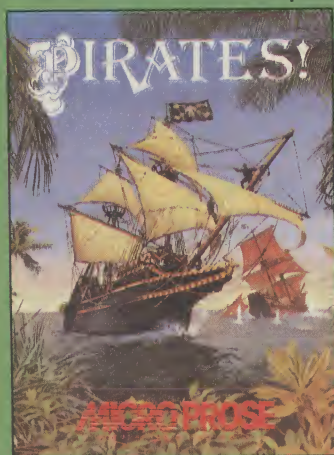
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NIGHTMARE ON SOFT ST.

John Minson looks into the past, present and future of horror software...

Fear. Your pulse races. Adrenalin rushes to your brain. Your breathing quickens and the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. The faces of fear. Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's tortured creation. The gruesomely gut-tearing tales of James Herbert. Clive Barker's creatures of the other world, another morality. The sardonic slice-and-dice wit of Freddy Krueger.

Fear in every form, in every medium. The ghost tale told by children. The Gothic novel's musty pages. The cinematic shocker that sends audiences screaming behind their seats. But computer games...

The first micro monsters were monstrousities in their own right. When Palace exhumed

The Evil Dead for its first ever release in 1984 it turned the cult film into a bland birds eye view of tiny sprites running around schematic rooms.

"Back in 1983 *Evil Dead* was one of the biggest films in Britain," Palace's Pete Stone recalls, "and I thought it would make a good game scenario. You had the hero trying to survive the nasties. But we never set out to make a horror game to scare people." Which is as well considering the only screams came from disappointed purchasers expecting a computer nasty.

About the same time unwitting gamers experienced an unlucky *Friday 13th* courtesy of Domark. This actually caused a minor uproar

over the bloody hockey mask on its box. Unfortunately the horror stopped there. Loading the program unleashed a series of stick figures who just wandered around waiting to be killed.

"Don't mention that..." Domark's Dominic Wheatley groans. "At the vague concept level we hoped it was a piece that could make people spooked. I believe that can be done but [*Friday 13th*] didn't do it because we placed it in the hands of people who were creatively incompetent."

So horror software got off to a grisly start and has generally remained as frightening as *Carry On Screaming* ever since. Software houses just don't seem to grasp what makes us gasp. The easiest (some might say laziest)

MONSTROUS PERSONALITY FREDDY KRUEGER ON HORROR SOFTWARE...



Freddy Krueger is the first movie monster with mass appeal since the 1930s and actor Robert Englund, who plays the child killer in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, believes he knows why.

"It's a monster with a personality... a diabolical sense of humour. It's not so much that I'm terribly funny but I relieve the tension. When you relieve the tension it's so much easier to set the audience up and scare them again."

Englund's analysis presents a considerable challenge to software scare-mongers. Giving sprites a personality is near impossible

and creating a structure with controlled peaks and troughs seems to go against the free-range nature of games.

British director Bernard Rose, whose recent film *Paperhouse* tackled the dreamscape in a more psychologically credible fashion than *Elm Street*'s parade of effects, also believes you must be able to manipulate the viewer.

"The whole point of the film [*Paperhouse*] is the audience feels quite confident with it for the first 40 minutes, that it's quite a nice little film, quite chilling perhaps, then suddenly you come at them with a sledgehammer." But as Horrorsoft's Mike Woodruff observes, if a game doesn't use the complete demolition kit almost immediately you've lost your player.

John Gilbert was a computer journalist before he founded award-winning *Fear* magazine and was actively involved in the development of Planika's 3D arcade adventure *Nosferatu*. He has doubts about horror and micros.

"We're still looking at glorified *Space Invaders*. People don't know how to handle horror. They don't do it seriously. You can do it in books or film but how do you put it on a computer with the very limited number of techniques available?"

Horror works, he says, because it gives us a buzz escaping our mundane reality and watching nasty things happen to characters on screen. "It plays on people's deepest and darkest secrets."

Englund agrees. "I read something - and I wish this was my quote but it's not - that it's like a little passion play. There's something about the catharsis and the dark and the scares and you address these absolutes of death and things but in the stylised form of the horror movie which is an approved thing we have in the culture."

It's very easy for a programmer to present you with pictures of death and destruction but the threat must be more than mere 'Loss of Life - Try Again' if it's to communicate man's morality and forces of ultimate evil. Sophisticated new forms, harnessing advanced processing power, sound and CD-I graphics, must be developed before games start to make us shiver.



Frankenstein from CRL. Horrible in more ways than one...

route is to recycle the iconography of horror from other media.

This means licensing a film, like Domark and Palace did, or lifting generic images and grafting them, Frankenstein-fashion, onto an existing game formula. Microdeal's *Fright Night* and Ariolasoft's *Werewolves of London* were simply arcade adventures wearing Halloween masks. However much they tested your intellect or joystick technique, they never sent a shiver down the spine.

As Chris Elliott of Eldritch Games, programmers of Electronic Arts' forthcoming *The Hound of Shadow* puts it, "When you have an animated figure it's difficult to make something an inch and a half tall horrific. You can make it grotesque but not horrific".

Not that it's stopped people trying. In the mid-eighties a pair of games, *Go To Hell*, from the ominously named 666 Software and Powerhouse's *Soft and Cuddly* laid on the gore with a shovel. Dig them up nowadays and you'll discover just how un-stomach churning Spectrum pixels are - unless you're particularly sensitive to attribute clash!

Even with today's high resolution machines graphic horror is not the solution, according to Chris Elliott. "You get into the problem that movies have. People soon become blasé. So you have to fall over yourself to be more and more gross. It's the law of diminishing returns."

CRL boss Clement Chambers agrees. "People have always said horror is exploitation and some people have taken that exploitation element and not delivered." His solution was to launch a series of adventure games based on the classic monsters, Frankenstein, Dracula and The Wolfman, plus the legend of real life slasher, Jack the Ripper.

Recreating the frisson of reading a horror novel proved more capable of raising goosebumps than aping shock horror films, though CRL still threw in the odd digitised picture of disembowelled damsels as a sop to the gore hounds. Chambers is quick to stress that the games were more than a series of unpleasant stills though: "These games are very visual but the context goes with it."

He's careful to draw the distinction between horror, the recoil in revulsion, and ter-

ror, the emotion of fear. "I always thought *Deus Ex Machina* [Automata's experimental life game] was quite terrifying. It's a question of artistry and that's something that's generally missing from this industry. Poe was not blood-thirsty but he was terrifying. We like to have both in our software."

While the CRL series and Infocom's Lovecraftian *The Lurking Horror* set out to scare adventurers, a couple of strategy games demonstrated an alternative approach. *Alien* appeared under Argus' Mindgames label while James Herbert's publisher Hodder and Stoughton briefly flirted with software for *The Rats*.

Neither title could be classed an unconditional success but both succeeded in generating suspense rarely found in arcade or adventure games. In *Alien* you searched the ship for the creature while *The Rats* followed the novel

closely as you investigated the mysterious rodent killings.

Both were played in real time, forcing you to react quickly. Despite schematic graphics (*Alien* was just a map) sound effects such as a quickening pulse, were used to good effect and the sudden appearance of the alien or rats chewing through the screen provided suitably disturbing climaxes as you prepared to meet your maker... or at least reload.

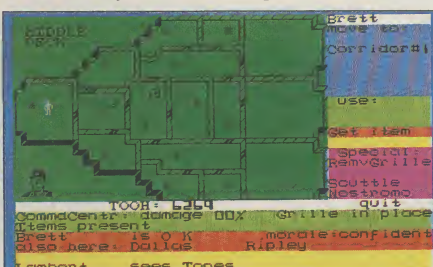
16-BIT SQUIRM?

Hardware has progressed since those 8-bit pathfinders and the horror genre is currently undergoing something of a renaissance... or should that be revenge? Electronic Arts is about to release a horror role playing game based on the works of classic horror writer HP Lovecraft (see box). And Tynesoft has launched a label devoted to terror.

Mike Woodruff, the brain behind Horrorsoft, has been involved in software since its earliest days, producing traditional text adventures including the mildly horrific and highly enjoyable *Gremlins*. Moving with the times he's now producing 16-bit games like *Heroes of the Lance*.

"I noticed that our type of game, the icon driven adventure, is selling well in the America but I thought that they're rather wet and airy

Computer games allow less time to develop an atmosphere than a film. Woodruff admits that he has to hook the player within ten minutes of they'll do something else. However he



Aliens from Argus Mind Games - they're still screaming about this one.

GETTING PAST THE CENSOR

When CRL released its horror adventures it opened another can of maggots. Clement Chambers interpreted the 1984 Video Recordings Act (VRA), introduced as a result of the 'video nasties' scare, as referring to computer games.

To this day Chambers insists that what he did was merely follow the letter of the law; that a computer game was (to quote the act) a 'video work... any series of visual images (with or without sound) a) produced electronically by the use of information contained on any disc or magnetic tape, and b) shown as a moving picture.'

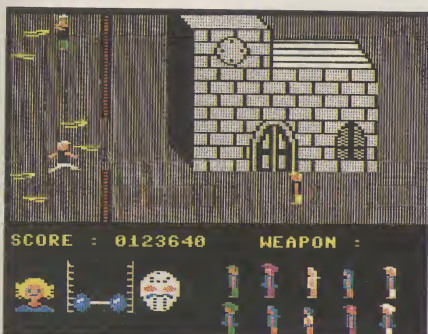
The VRA states that any such work had to be submitted to the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the body responsible for certifying films, if: 'to any significant extent it depicts...) mutilation or torture of, or other acts of gross violence towards humans or animals.'

Despite the fact that, as ACE so carefully pointed out at the time, the act refers to 'moving' pictures, the BBFC's panel played Chambers' games, examined their

digitised images, and passed judgment. The classic monsters were rated as fit for 15 year olds but the real life *Jack the Ripper* finally achieved the coveted 18, leading to items on the radio and in the press.

Nowadays you get the idea that the Board is faintly embarrassed by the whole affair. A spokesperson said, "The four CRL programs were submitted voluntarily and probably did quite well in terms of publicity for them but we've had nothing since." As the cost of classification can reach £1000, it's easy to understand why there wasn't a rush to follow CRL's lead.

However this raises an important point. As CD-I becomes a reality, a game which included filmed or animated sequences of a bloodthirsty nature certainly would come within the letter of the law. But unlike a film, which can only be viewed in one, linear fashion, a game is interactive so has no set pattern. Could the BBFC make fair decisions about a medium which is only superficially similar to their area of expertise? Only time will tell...



Friday 13th from Domark – a game the company prefer to forget.

has innovative ideas which harness the potential of the latest machines.

"Imagine if you have a player sitting in the dark with his Amiga wired up to stereo speakers, and he has one by his side and the other by the window. Suddenly there's the sound of a tap from the window and while he looks to see what it is we flash something up on the screen."

"We're approaching it the same way a film director approaches a film. We've got a special language and it's written like a script for graphics, sound and data." Of course to produce this total sensation he requires the player's co-operation in turning down the lights, placing speakers correctly and suspending disbelief, but Woodruff believes this isn't too much to ask of somebody who's spent £25-£30 for the software.

The pioneers of software screams, Dominic Wheatley and Pete Stone, both believe that someday games will have same the power to scare as films or books. "I've never seen it done," says Wheatley, "but I'm sure a game form does exist. I don't know how to do it though. I think that sound is a big element." Stone adds, "In principle I think you will be able to scare people in the future but at the moment advances in technology are not great enough." fairy. So I decided to produce a more adult product."

This appealed to Tynesoft, as sales director Trevor Scott recalls: "We did some market research and found that horror is massive in all media. But we felt nobody was addressing it in software and you have to do something different in this industry."

Limiting itself to a few quality titles a year, the label is about to follow up *Personal Nightmare* with *Elvira*. Woodruff says that they will be aimed at the fantasy/Gothic end of the horror spectrum. "You might find a drill in one of the games," he says, "but there won't be a plug on it."

Instead he intends to induce shivers with more restrained images. "In *Personal Nightmare* you have to cut the fingers off a corpse to get a prayer book. I wanted players to grimace as they did it." Another instance occurs in the latest game if you stray into the garden, where a falconer trains his hawk. Suddenly the bird swoops down and tears out your eye. The final image is of the bloody orb clasped in his claw. Did he say restrained?

Woodruff defends the gore by referring to the covers of horror paperbacks and the content of comics like *Heavy Metal*. Today's viewer expects his horror to have, well, guts. His primary concern is suspense though. "It's like a film. As the heroine walks down the stairs with the lights off you want the audience to go, 'Oh no!'"

LOVECRAFT, HORROR, AND MADNESS

Chris Elliott and Richard Edwards of Eldritch Games, authors of Electronic Arts' *The Hound of Shadows*, are HP Lovecraft aficionados. HP who? Unlike Poe, Lovecraft remains relatively unknown in Britain though films like *The Reanimator* and *From Beyond* are starting to change all that.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born in 1890 in New England. A prodigy, he was reading by the age of three and writing a year later. His grandfather's 2,000 volume library left him with a lifelong passion for the 18th century's style and language. However his childhood was isolated and unhappy. His father died in an asylum when he was only eight; his mother was neurotically protective. Paranoia and madness are recurring themes in his work.

He was only 15 when he wrote his first horror story, *The Beast in the Cave*, but soon after turned to verse and essays and it wasn't until 1918 that he resumed writing fiction. His six part story '*Herbert West - Reanimator*' was published in 1922 and soon he was a regular contributor to *Weird Tales* pulp magazine.

For the next fifteen years Lovecraft and his disciples created the Cthulhu Mythos, a completely realised private mythology based around the ancient Great Old Ones, whose followers plotted their return. Though he died of cancer in 1937 his influence on virtually every modern horror writer continues to this day.

"He's not a good writer technically," Elliott admits, "in some ways he's appalling. His one trick is to stick the ending in italics with three dots at the end." But despite the purple prose, Lovecraft touches a nerve.

"There really are things out to get you and

the world," says Edwards. "They're not after you personally. They just don't even notice you." "It's the idea of huge, impersonal forces," Elliott continues. "It's ghastly because there are things out there which would drive you mad if you could see them."

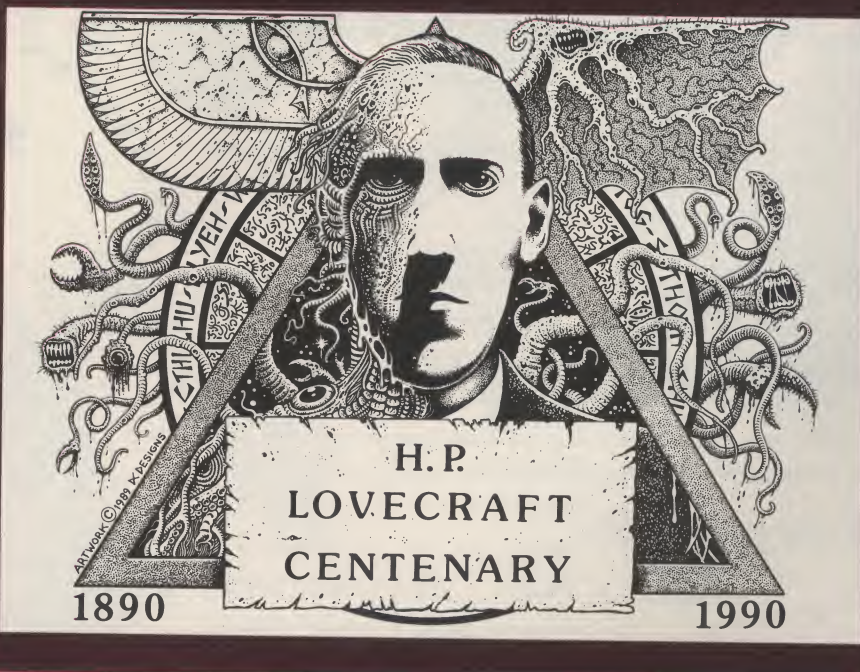
The creation of such a malevolent, paranoid universe, where dreadful secrets haunt the cellars of rotting mansions, calls for innovative game techniques. Eldritch is using role playing to bring Lovecraft to life.

"It's better than the traditional adventure," says Elliott. "That's very much about the collection of objects - there's the feeling of the player being in control. But for the atmosphere of horror you've got to feel that somebody else is in control. The first element of horror is a feeling of helplessness. And role playing is all about character and interaction."

He realises the problems inherent in this though. "Horror is a very fragile atmosphere. With computers you're dealing with an interactive medium which is like no other. But this surrenders any sense of control you have as a storyteller."

"It's very easy to go from horror into farce," Edwards adds. "The wrong word can blow the atmosphere. So *Hound of Shadow* is mostly low key. There's no dripping blood every thirty seconds giving the impression you're walking through a slaughterhouse. So when the horror comes it's more affecting."

Lovecraft transcended stylistic infelicities to terrify us with a world where insignificant man faces omnipotent evil. Eldritch Games also hope to break the boundaries of their medium and give us a glimpse of that mythology.



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CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

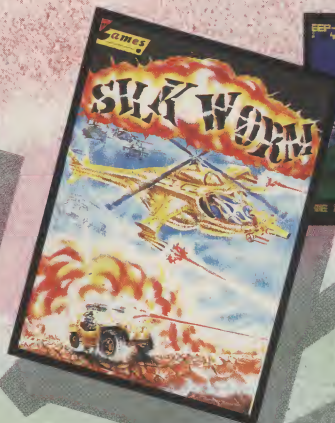
Compete in formula one races in Brazil, America, France, Monaco, Germany, Spain and Japan. Race hard, but watch out for other cars. Colliding can be fatal. And do visit the pits for fuel and repairs.



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Player Information		History	
Name	Z. Barnes	This yr.	Last yr.
Position	Midfield	Injuries	2 1
Height	180	Bans	0 1
Weight	150	Goals	2 4
Age	23	Matches	10 18
League	1st	Int	1st 2nd 3rd 4th
Dexterity	106	0	0 0 1 1
Stamina	128		
Acceleration	149		
Temporament	143		
Work rate	84		

Anco is giving away a stunning Sony video camcorder worth £700, a football shirt of your favourite team and a copy of Anco's latest release, *Player Manager*...

Anco's latest release "brings the quality of *Kick Off* to the art of football management"... As the newly appointed *Player Manager* and international class player, you take charge of a third division club with just one simple objective: 'bring back the glory days!'

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Off), managerial skills (get the right tactics and players to form a winning team), tactics (choose from four well proven tactics or design your own ingenious combinations of defense and offense) and players (over 1000 players to choose from, each with their own attributes like shooting, pace and aggression)...

...And that's just for starters, other factors to be taken into consideration include refs, injuries and disciplinary problems. But who said

it was going to be easy?

Player Manager is available now on ST and Amiga for £19.95dk – with Spectrum, Amstrad and C64 £9.95cs/£14.95dk due soon. Meanwhile, don't forget Anco are hard at work on *Kick Off II* – and they're eager for suggestions from current *Kick Off* players. Pop your suggestions on the postcard along with your entry (don't worry – they don't count in the competition).

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The Sony CCDF250 is the latest addition to Sony's extensive, and award winning, camcorder range.

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- Which football team won the FA Cup in 1981?
(a) Liverpool (b) Arsenal (c) Tottenham
- Which football team won the FA Cup in 1982?
(a) Liverpool (b) Arsenal (c) Tottenham

3. Finally, tell us which are your two favourite sections or articles in this month's ACE, and your two LEAST favourite sections. Don't worry – there are no 'right answers' for this question. We just want to hear your views, and whatever you say will in no way affect the outcome of the competition.

Please write your answers (in BLOCK CAPITALS) on the back of a postcard. Don't forget to include your full name, address and telephone number. Don't forget to include

the following details: your computer and your favourite football team.

Send your completed postcard to:
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THE PRIZES

The Sony CCDF250 camcorder will be awarded to the first entry giving the correct answers to questions (1) and (2) drawn at random from the entries received prior to the closing date. A football team shirt (of the winners own team choice) will be awarded to the second correct entry and a copy of *Player Manager* will be awarded to the third correct entry drawn.

THE RULES

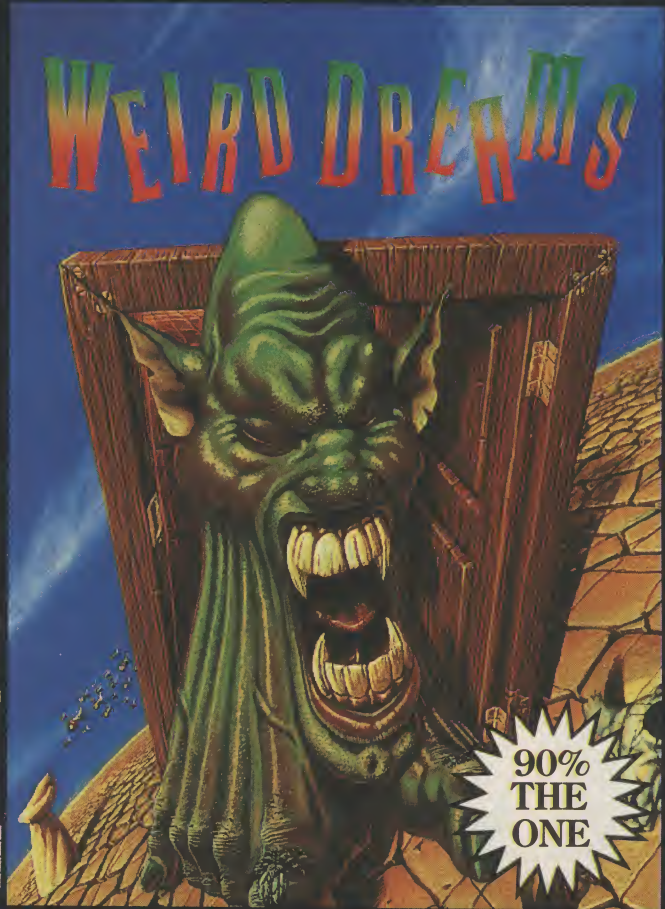
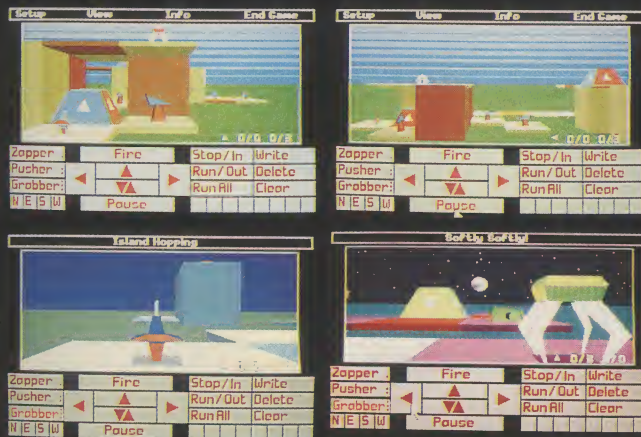
- The closing date for entries is 7th December, 1989.
- Employees of EMAP, ANCO and SONY are not eligible for entry.
- The editors decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



OUT OF THIS WORLD

TOWER OF BABEL

An intricate 3D strategy game involving an interconnecting network of towers, platforms and lifts all rendered in solid 3D with innovative light and shading techniques. Take control of robot spiders and program them to solve problems and puzzles and interact with other creatures, such as Pushers, Zappers and Grabbers. Alternatively, real time control is available to you at any time for instantaneous reaction to the game's developments. For the more adventurous among you, there is a complete game designer, allowing the construction of your own series of towers, platforms and lifts. Attempt to fox your friends with your own fiendishly difficult creations. More than just a game, more than just a puzzle – Tower of Babel is a whole new concept in strategy gaming.



WEIRD DREAMS

A RIDE ALONG THE ROCKY ROAD OF SUBCONSCIOUS THOUGHT, WITHOUT SHOCK ABSORBERS.

Imagine yourself in a world full of nightmares with Dali-Esque creatures & mind eating eyes. Picture yourself in an upside down landscape Alone in a weird dream & wondering what the . . .

"Weird Dreams is stunning. It's one of the most bizarre concepts yet seen on a computer being more of an experience than a game".

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A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIFICE

Since the birth of photography the camera has been consistently manipulated to do the one thing its exponents said it couldn't - lie. At no time though, has it lied more inventively and efficiently than at the present. With the increasingly common use of computers in design and, in particular advertising, image manipulation has become an exercise in creative duplicity. The recent 'Machine Dreams' exhibition at London's Photographer's Gallery illustrated what happens when you give artists the latest in state-of-the-art machinery to play with. Mike Pattenden went along to take a look at the results.

Nearly every advertisement you see in national magazines like the Sunday supplements has been manipulated in some way. Often the colours have been changed, an area has been darkened, a blemish removed, and sometimes whole segments have been created by repeating a section of the image many times.

Since the advent of computer screens with very high-resolution screens linked to publishing tools like scanners this kind of image distortion is commonplace. It's simply no longer safe to believe your eyes.

The reaction of the half dozen artists who were offered the systems to use was not to attempt to create some sort of perfect image using the multitude of tools at their disposal, but to demonstrate their consummate ability to deceive. Frequently conflicting images were juxtaposed against each other to make the point.

Photographer David Godbold took a nineteenth century black and white etching of Napoleon surveying troops across a bay, coloured it and subtracted nearly all the soldiers from the scene to create an almost picturesque scene, demonstrating a falsification of history. All this, moreover, was without the artist ever seeing the actual print, it was produced by communicating via fax from Australia. Another, still more impressive, recreated Monet's 'Water Lilies' using garden vegetables. Commercial artist Tessa Traegar multiplied images (the arched bridge, for example, was composed of a string of cucumbers) and then smeared them to create the effect of movement and reflected colour.

The attitude of nearly all the artists to the technology they were dealing with was one of wariness and not a little suspicion. With some reason perhaps because the distortion of truth that such systems offer is frightening. The



His Science Knows His Nature
- Graham Budget

Two parts of a triptych, these use photomontage to a highly creative degree, taking and distorting our views of progress. The picture (inset) of Yuri Gagarin was lifted straight from a postcard, whilst in the main image the satellite floating high above the heat sensitised picture of California's coastline is the dial from a digital clock. The carefully arranged numerals reinforce the point.





Pig - Mick Dean

This is a composite of four transparencies: a pig's head, a fish on a plate, some chicks and a cat in a glass cupboard.

CIA in America have long been researching into the power of visual communication or 'perception management' as they call it.

Rightly, a medium which is so obviously open to misuse should be approached with care, the possibilities are only as limited as the imagination. It would be interesting to have seen an artist subvert the system to their own ends. Only then will art lead technology, not technology lead art.

Machine Dreams can be found at the Photographer's Gallery, 5&8 Great Newport Street, London WC2 (8311772) until Nov 4.



Icarus - Calum Colvin

Assembled from several transparencies and an etching, each of differing proportions to create a seamless montage. Attention to detail is shown in the way that even the highlights on the solid objects suggest that all the light has originated from the same source.



Heat and Shadows - David Hiscock

This artist is known for the way he takes images and disfigures them, often by scratching them. Using the Crosfield he was able to take two transparencies and then using the paint option to smear the flames and smoke in other colours.

THE SYSTEMS

Sophisticated computer imaging equipment made all the pictures in the exhibition possible. Artists were offered use of a Crosfield Imaginator II, Quantel Graphic Paintbox, and a Scitex Imager System. The Crosfield is based on a 386 PC with a colour scanner and an 8000 line per inch high resolution monitor. With a number of transparencies in memory (a 10"x8" will fill approximately 40 million bytes of data) the options exist to cut paste, redraw and superimpose. A paintbox of a staggering 6 million colours means that images can be retouched in any colour imaginable. The finished image can be output direct as a 5"x4" transparency. An Imaginator II will set you back about £50,000 if you're interested. The system is currently in use on Today newspaper and Time magazine.

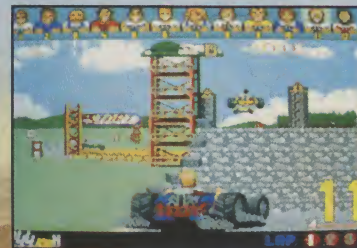
POWER DRIFT



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CAREFUL! Power Drift is no easy ride!

If you're heading for a collision hold onto your seat and enjoy those 360 degree spins before you bump back down to earth!

Burn some rubber, put your foot to the floor and scream back to the winning post!!

ACTIVISION SEGA

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INFESTATION



INFESTATION

Are you ready for a new level of realism in computer games? Are you prepared for an atmospheric experience you will never forget? Can you cope with super-fast solid 3D vector graphics? Will you venture into the unknown, alone, and armed only with a single pulse rifle? Can you overcome the INFESTATION?

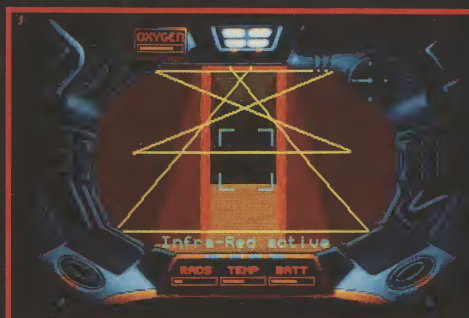
INFESTATION takes computer games to a new level of realism. It creates a complete environment stunningly rendered in super-fast solid 3D vector graphics. You are completely free to move within the game world, examining and manipulating objects just as you would in a real world. And, as in reality, you are not alone. Only, unlike those on Earth, the other occupants of Infestation's world are not very friendly at all...

Your task as Kal Solar, Agent of the Interplanetary Federation, is to travel to Alpha II, investigate and end the alien threat. Your mission will not be an easy one. As well as the mother alien and its eggs, you will have to deal with hostile droids and computer systems, radioactive areas, and things unknown.

INFESTATION is a truly atmospheric experience. Don't play this game when you're alone... it may well be your last!

Screen Shots from the Atari ST version AMIGA/ATARI ST £24.95

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SCREEN TEST

PIC CURVE POWER

The PIC – Predicted Interest Curve – is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around. Here's why...

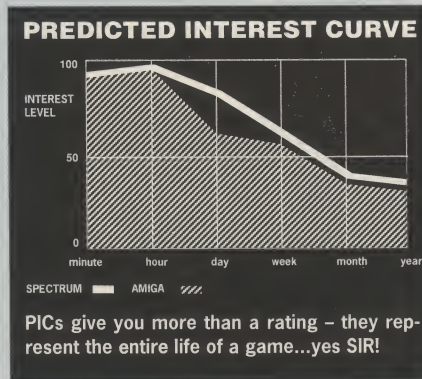
The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. But this tells you an awful lot than just what your interest level will be at any given time (although that's obviously important in itself)...

For example, a high one minute rating means that the game must look fantastic and get you all excited from the word go. That means it's probably a good game to show off to the neighbours – after all, they probably aren't going to pay attention for much more than a minute, after which they'll go back to drinking coffee and making rude remarks about 'those awful hostile games the boys play these days'.

The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot about a game too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into – not recommended if you like to get down to something quick and easy. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.

Finally, you've got the month and year ratings. The better a game holds up here the more deserving it is of your hard earned cash.

PIC curve construction takes a lot of playing on the part of ACE reviewers. PIC curve analysis is an art in itself. The reward is knowing just what you're getting when you make the decision to splash out on *Mutant MacDonald Gettysburgers*...or *F15 Strike Eagle II* – just one of this month's excellent examples of today's software technology.



Star Trek V – the legend continues on pages 52/53 as the Enterprise boldly goes over the top once again...

DON'T FORGET THE UPDATES!

PC *Carrier Command* is this month's Truly Great Conversion, but then *Stunt Car* for the C64 isn't something to moan about either. Check out pp99/102.

THE ACE REVIEWING SYSTEM

PIC CURVES

This unique feature to the ACE reviewing system charts the interest level that a game stimulates over a period of time. The curve is accompanied by a comment to explain why it's the shape it is. Find out more in the Pic Curve Power panel on this page...

Each review also carries special 'Version Boxes' that give you details of the game's implementation on a specific machine. These boxes include ratings for...

GRAPHICS

All aspects of the game's graphics with the limitations of each machine taken into account. A good-looking Spectrum game will therefore score higher than an average-looking Amiga one.

AUDIO

The music and sound effects are rated here. A high rating is

possible on even limited machines like the Spectrum and PC if the computer's shortcomings are cleverly sidestepped.

IQ FACTOR

Yes, sometimes you have to use your brain. This rating evaluates the risk of mental effort – which some people actually enjoy...Note that ACE readers are generally reckoned to be more intelligent than other human beings, so the ratings may be lower than you expect...

FUN FACTOR

Basically a measure of mindless addictiveness. Games like *Arkanoïd* and *Flying Shark* require virtually zero brain power but are still remarkably addictive. Most coin-ops score well here because they are designed for instant satisfaction. Games don't have to be either fun or intelligent – they can be both.

ACE RATING

This is not just plucked out of the air but is calculated from the area under the PIC Curve. To get a really high rating a game will not only have to be very addictive but stand the test of time as well. Just because a game does not get over 900 does not mean we are not recommending it – the following is a general guide to what the ratings mean.

900+ A classic game, recommended without reservation.

800-899 A superb game, but perhaps lacking the long-term depth to last into the month and year categories.

700-799 Still highly recommended, but probably has a couple of aspects to the gameplay that take the edge off it.

600-699 The 'fair' zone, where it tends to be very good 'if you like that sort of thing'.

500-599 This still has good things going for it, but the game clearly has some noticeable problems.

400-499 Problems with gameplay and programming make this an inferior game.

300-399 Not only is the gameplay bad but the design was probably flawed in the first place.

200-299 Things are getting really serious now... **100-199** ZX81 games running on an Amiga.

Under 100 Nothing has ever achieved this appalling level of rating. If anything ever does, it wouldn't even be worth having it for free.

VERSION BOXES

This covers version-specific information on graphics, audio, loading problems etc. If there's no box for your machine but a version is planned, it'll be covered as an update in a later issue.

THE TEAM

...includes **Steve Cooke**, one of the original editors of this award-winning magazine, known to thousands through his many other previous identities, including Zzap!s White Wizard, The Pilgrim, and Old Baldy. **Eugene Lacey** is the man who put Britain's top-selling games magazine, C&VG, on the map. Luckily for us, Eugene got fed up with writing for 8-year olds and decided the time had come to tackle the challenge of ACE magazine. As one of Britain's most experienced games journalists, his word is LAW.

Laurence Scotford is ACE's new staff writer – Laurence has been playing games since he was nipper, but some of them we probably ought not to mention. There was hot competition for the ACE Staff Writer position from gamers all over the country, but Laurence pipped them all at the post by show-

ing that he could not only push a game to its limit, but he could push a pen too and tell you all about it. Other reviewers include *Kati Mamza* and *Gordon Houghton*, both of whom used to provide the reviewing talent for 'another magazine' but decided that ACE was worthier of their talents. Finally, **Mike Pattenden** is editor of *Commodore User*, one Britain's most prestigious Commodore magazines. What Mike doesn't know about software could be written on a 6502...

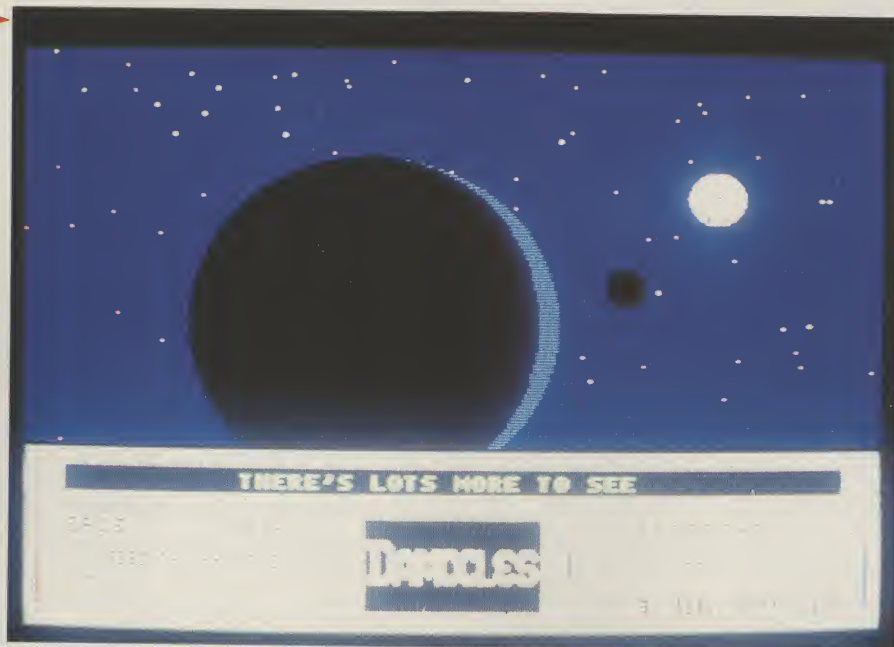
We don't review anything until we are 100% certain that we've got it right. We've checked them out thoroughly – now you can too.

Approaching Eris at warp speed. ➤

DAMOCLES is a giant comet hurtling through space on a direct collision course with the planet Eris. Having successfully escaped from the planet Targ in *Mercenary* the player must stop the comet from colliding with the planet in three hours time.

To have played *Mercenary* is an advantage as the game play structure is similar, and you can save the items that you collected on Targ and use them in the new game. It is not essential though – as *Damocles* is a self contained challenge.

The first thing that will strike you when *Damocles* performs its breath taking opening sequence is the quality of the 3D effects. Paul Woakes has improved on the 3D solid vector technique employed in *Mercenary* with greater speed, smoothness, and detail. The excellence of *Damocles* graphics – with its sunsets, landscapes and architecture provides further evi-



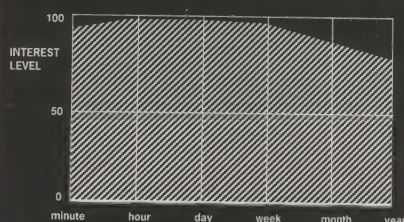
DAMOCLES

Trouble with Novagen comets

dence of David Braben's (author of *Elite* and *Virus*) claim in last month's ACE that there is still a long way to go in 3D on 16-bit computers.

Paul Woakes was one of the people who pushed the limits of 8-bit 3D gaming. *Damocles* will do the same in the 16-bit area – though Novagen regrets that it's not going to be able to implement the game design on 8-bit

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Damocles is so open and easy to get into, has a challenge that you can do in different ways, ignore if you want to, and still enjoy.

ST VERSION

Novagen has stretched the ST to its limits in *Damocles*. The speed of 3D imaging has to be seen to be believed – and without any loss of accuracy in the graphics. The ST has to support powerful maths routines to simulate the sunsets, movement of the planets, and the 3D world of *Damocles* – all of which it handles admirably. Colours are dramatic and convincing. Good, though sparse, use of sound.

GRAPHICS 9 IQ FACTOR 9
AUDIO 7 FUN FACTOR 9

ACE RATING 935



Into Eris's outer atmosphere.

machines. Bad news for the loyal army of C64 owning *Mercenary* fans.

Novagen claims that "if *Damocles* had a care for the mechanics of flying, it would be the best 16-bit flight simulator ever". When you are flying into one of the Space Centre's on one of the nine planets in orbit around the star Dialis it's difficult to dispute this claim. But whether Novagen's boast is true or not doesn't really matter as the main attraction of *Damocles* is in the game challenge itself, rather than in the speed and realism of its 3D graphics engine.

Like *Mercenary*, *Damocles* has a large chunk of adventure in it. There is no set way of stopping that comet. There are a number of ways of doing it – some easier than others – even one that enables you to prevent the colli-

sion seconds before it happens.

The similarity with *Mercenary* and with adventure games ends in the use of objects. There are dozens of these to find and examined on the nine planets and their 19 moons – and you will need to use a good deal of them if you are to prevent the catastrophe on the beautiful watery planet of Eris.

When an object is picked up it appears in the *Damocles* window in the centre of the ship's control panel. Instructions on how to use it can also be brought up in this panel. To say too much about the combination of objects and how to use them would spoil the game – but as an illustration of the type of objects and their sophistication there is the camera. You can use this fully, taking remote control over it if you so desire. You may want to set up surveillance on one of the moons to watch the progress of the comet. This is possible with the video camera. You may even want to watch the catastrophe taking place if you have failed in your first attempt. This is easily done by placing a camera on a nearby planet, or one of Eris's moons.

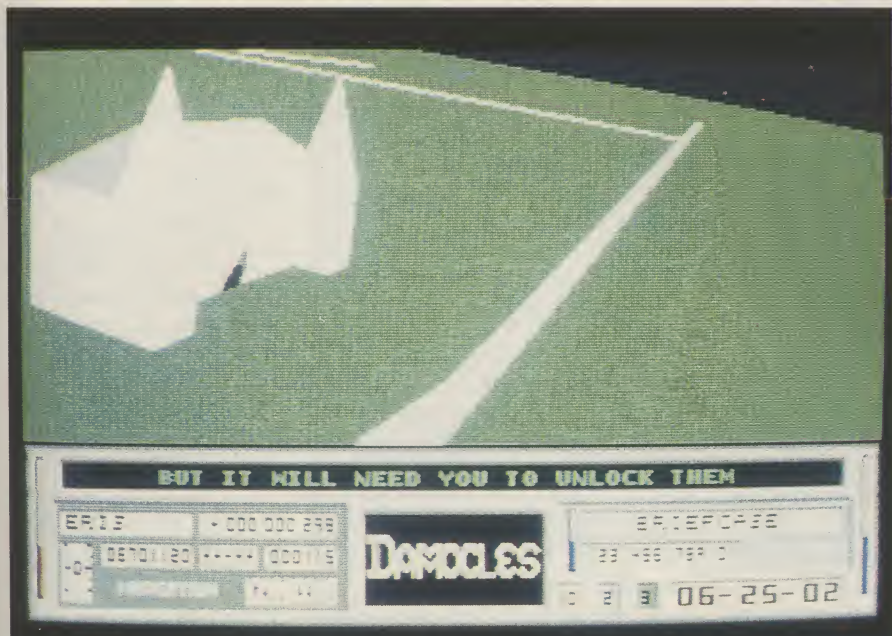
It is also possible to take remote control of the ship if you wish to watch it performing a landing, firing its lasers at something, or simply flying into a sun set.

Exploration of the buildings is a large part of the gameplay. There are a lot more of these than in *Mercenary* and they are lot much bigger – many of them with lifts, stacks or corridors, windows and doors.

Some of the more notable buildings are the windmill (looks idyllic as its sails slowly turn against the back drop of the setting sun), parliament building, bars, shops and space centres. The really neat thing about the buildings is that you can peer out through them at

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ATARI ST	£24.95dk	IMMINENT
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The Parliament building - where you will be briefed by the president.

any time and see the world just as you left it. If you park your ship outside the bar you can look at it from the window. The relationships of objects to each other is always accurate - however much you manipulate these objects. It is this that makes for a totally believable world. A world that looks the same from whatever angle you explore it. The best illustration of this is the shop window. If you go inside the shop and place a table in the win-

dow you can then come outside of the shop and see that table exactly where you placed it. That may not sound like anything that marvelous - but when you consider that it is all happening in 3D, without any whirr of the disk drive, interruption of the screen action, and maintaining the positions of all the other objects on screen relative to the table and everything else in the picture, then you can understand that this is a gameplay system far

more powerful than anything else like it. There isn't really anything like it in fact - save possibly *Darkside*, but this doesn't have the control over objects that is possible in *Damocles*.

Time is very important in *Damocles*. Not just because seconds are ticking away before the comet crashes into Eris, but because time travel, from planet to planet, and around individual planets, is all weighted against the real time that you have to achieve the mission.

Very little is given away at the beginning of the game. You have to discover the secrets and clues as you explore the planets and cities. The cities themselves have connecting road networks and there are land vehicles to use if you so desire. I preferred flying low over the roads, but race fans might fancy a bit of speeding along the alien roads.

To help you unravel the mystery of *Damocles* and stop that comet you have your old friend from *Mercenary* along with you - Benson, the 9th generation PC.

Benson communicates with you through a message panel on the ship control panel. He has stacks of wry observations, hints, clues and amusing asides - which help to lighten the slightly lonely, solo world of *Damocles*.

Damocles has everything - the thrill of discovery, the fun of exploration, a totally believable world, a tough challenge, and even the odd bit of blasting. It could well become an all time classic, up there in the Premier League with games like *Falcon*, *Carrier Command* and *Elite*.

● Eugene Lacey

INTERPHASE

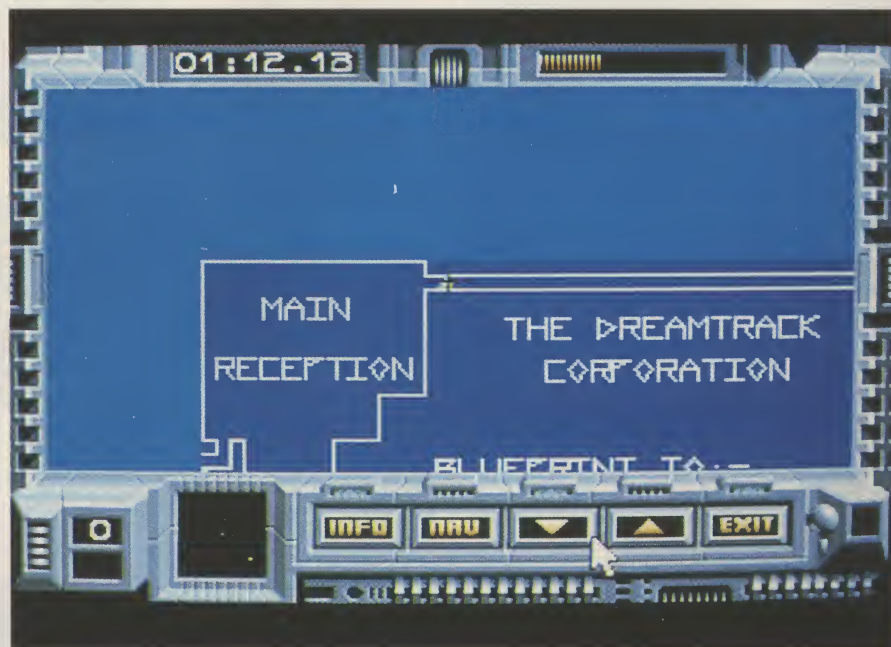
Image Works dream of a game

NEUROMANCER provided the inspiration for *Interphase*. The famous cyberpunk world of hi-tech dreams, created by the cult sci-fi novel, is what *Interphase* is all about.

The game supposes a world where the leisured classes have given up on computer games, grown tired of the latest theme parks, Acid house banquets and turned, instead, to the roller-coaster netherworld of the DreamTracks and Dream Recording.

The DreamTracks are the play missions of *Interphase*. Supposedly recorded by the big corporations of the future to keep the masses safely engaged in pointless leisure so that they can be more effectively exploited - it is down to you, Chadd, to get and destroy the MasterTrack to end this subliminal thought control.

What this impressive, if unoriginal, game scenario gives rise to is a 3D arcade adventure - a seek, blast, and explore challenge on the lines of *Star Glider II* or *Damocles*.



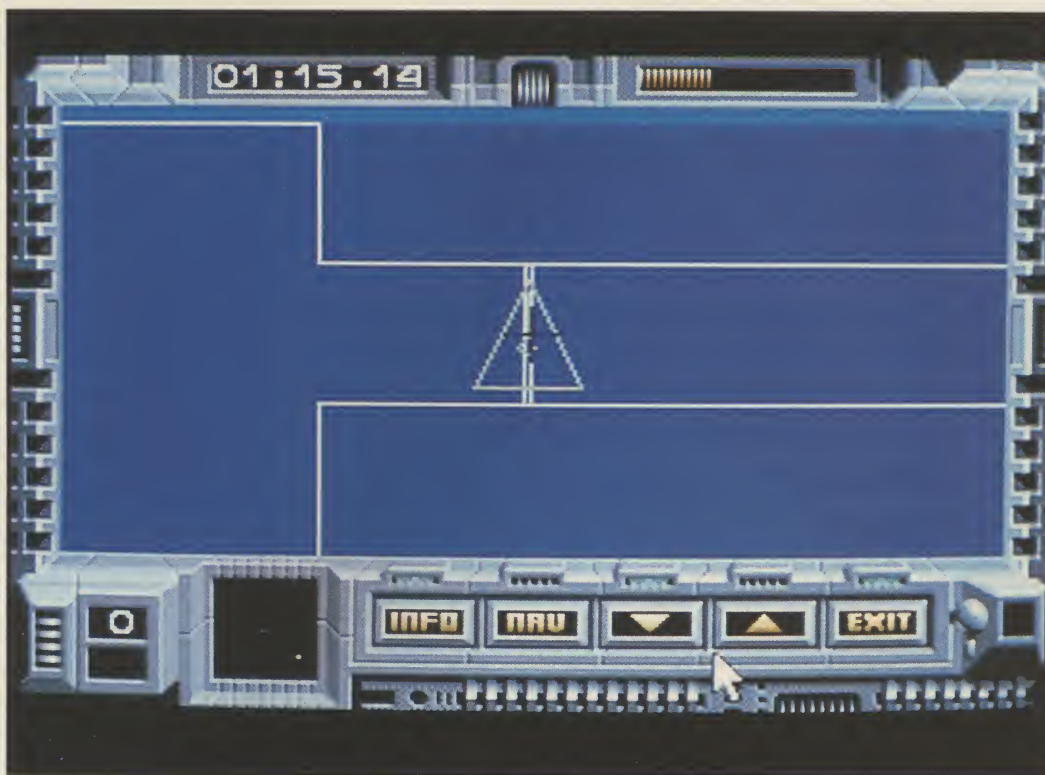
The blue print map of the Dreamtrack Complex.

The advantage *Interphase* has over these two games is its ability to switch out of 3D mode into a 2D map and control screen - where you are given instructions and informa-

tion on targets that you have to seek out and eliminate.

The map and information screens are a delight. You can zoom in and out of the blue

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IBM PC	£24.99dk	December



Zooming in on the blue print.

responsibility. Some of them can be taken out with straight laser fire, while others require a missile to be locked onto them before they can be eliminated. You can also dock with certain security devices and alter them from within or simply move them out the way with your tractor beam.

To help you find your way around the computer there is a 'Navcom' device to guide you to the object you need to work on. This works by a system of directional arrows as you fly, two green arrows appear when the item 'Navcomed' onto has been reached.

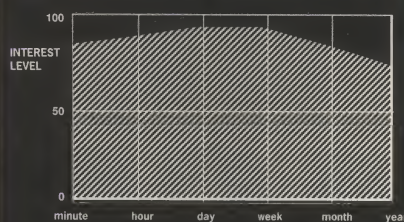
You can fail your mission by running out of energy, or if your partner is caught by a robot or steps onto a high voltage floor. It is therefore crucial to keep a constant check on

the girl's progress and whereabouts using the blue print – so that you can protect her and clear the path for her, and guide her safely to the MasterTrack.

She is carrying a small transmitter which she can use to send messages, but you cannot communicate with her directly and of course, the DreamTrack computer will also be aware of any messages she sends out. It is therefore essential to become quick at carrying out manoeuvres. You have to constantly monitor what is going on and react to it if you are to succeed in your task.

The various objects that protect the DreamTrack computer are excellently drawn, and there is a good deal of fun to be had when you first get the game just following them around, lobbing missiles at them and working out what they are all for. Hardly anything is there just for show. There are Turntables for example at certain junctions that you can manipulate to guide your partner in the right direction, Cloning Plants constantly churning

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Interphase is tough. A good number of hours, saved games, and work on strategy will be needed to destroy the MasterTrack

AMIGA VERSION

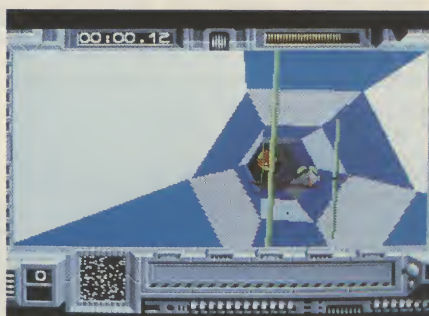
A great assortment of eerie buzzes, bleeps and hisses helps enhance the strange world of *Interphase*. The filled vector graphics work swiftly and smoothly and combine lots of detail with plenty of animation.

GRAPHICS 9 IQ FACTOR 9
AUDIO 8 FUN FACTOR 8
ACE RATING 915

print to look at certain objects within the dream track, such as a surveillance camera or a security door – click on the mouse for more information and you are given an animated 3D view of the object with a print out of information on that object. You need this information if you are to get anywhere in *Interphase*. The blue print screens also enable you to communicate with your girlfriend who has penetrated the system, and is attempting to steal the control MasterTrack so that it can be destroyed.

Flight controls are implemented via the mouse and they do take a bit of getting used to. By pushing forward or back – and taking

A generator - use it to top up energy. ▶



The tunnel screen. You must survive this to get into the Dream Track.

your finger on and off the mouse button – you can fly forward, backwards, accelerate, decelerate, bank left, right or stop. The feeling is very much of a flight-sim as you explore the innards of the DreamTrack computer system.

As well as all the cameras that you will have to take out of commission to give your partner room to manoeuvre there are also stacks of ground based and airborne defence craft operating in the computer. These are your



DAMOCLES VS INTERPHASE

Damocles and *Interphase* both feature some of the best 3D programming currently available in 16-bit games. They are the new standard, with *Starglider II* and *Interceptor* stepping down the pecking order. Both offer an absorbing strategic challenge, both will have rave reviews in just about every magazine you pick up, they cost the same and are both on the shelves of your local soft shop around about now. So which one do you spend money on? Most magazines will cop out on this question – raving about both of them, with the implicit suggestion that you should buy them both. This is of course a luxury that few of us could afford, so at ACE we will not conveniently avoid a comparison that so obviously needs to be made. We think *Damocles* is the better game for the following reasons. It is more open ended than *Interphase*. There is no set way of winning – indeed you can still play the game and derive a great deal of enjoyment from it even if you ignore the comet hurtling towards the planet Eris. It is packed with secrets that you will discover slowly, as you play it over a period of time. *Damocles* is also far easier to get into, but every bit as tough to beat as *Interphase*. The comparisons of the speed of the 3D techniques are not really relevant as both games achieve the highest possible standard in this department. *Damocles* may be slightly prettier, but this too, is a matter of pure taste. The main reason we put *Damocles* ahead of *Interphase* is because of the quality of the game design – more challenging, more absorbing and ultimately more rewarding.



Security door to next level.

out droids that it is sensible to close down, and energy sources that you need to locate to replenish your own supply.

What is particularly nice about the various structures and defence systems inside the DreamTrack computer is that almost everything 'has moving parts. The effect is of a factory in full production. The reality of most computers is the complete opposite of this of course, as they are in reality a static electronic world of circuits and chips, but the effect in *Interphase* is totally convincing despite this, a sort of surreal electronic world out of control – which fits exactly with the scenario of the game.

Interphase is a fast and furious challenge. You need to think

quickly, and you get a genuine feeling that the computer you are competing against is thinking equally quickly.

Like *Damocles*, *Interphase* has had two years of intensive effort spent on it. Graphics are 'state of the art' 3D and the gameplay and plot have been thoroughly worked through to provide an entertaining, lasting challenge that is sure to stack up with *Xenon* and *Speedball* as one of Image Works best titles to date. Highly recommended to gamers who want all of the thrills of aerial combat with a cerebral element as well.

● Eugene Lacey

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TO ANFIELD

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IMPRESSIONS



STAR TREK

STAR Trek has a chequered past as a computer game, which is odd when you consider how ideally suited the Trekkie storyline is, and how much scope there is for building gameplay around the Starship Enterprise. Firebird were responsible for the biggest Trekkie cock-up of all with a game that seemed to get lost in a black hole in mid-development – emerging about four years too late to universal indifference.

The good news is that Mindscape have finally unlocked the potential of Star Trek with this new game, launched at exactly the same time as Star Trek V goes on general release – uncharacteristically good timing for a new Star Trek computer game.

The game is based closely on the storyline of the film – the renegade Vulcan Skybok has taken command of the Enterprise and is steering her on a course through the Great Barrier to the centre of the galaxy. Battered, and low on energy, Enterprise is pursued by a Klingon Bird of Prey – closing at warp speed and loading its torpedoes.

As Captain T Kirk it is your mission from Starfleet to deliver three Ambassadors to a safe planet. Interacting with your crew – Scotty, Uhura and the redoubtable Spock – you

MINDSCAPE boldly
go where most
softcos cock up...



have to take decisions quickly to complete the mission. Advanced control of the Enterprise is possible with a large, simulator-style manual explaining all of the systems at Captain Kirk's fingertips.

The key controls, requiring careful monitoring, are the weapons systems – Phasers, Photon Torpedoes, and Shield strength. The status of these is represented by bar graphs on the Enterprise main control panel. Each of these has its own targeting system – and this too, needs to be fully understood to deal with the various enemy ships that Enterprise will encounter in its adventure.

Various engineering displays and 'Power Available' reports can be checked to make certain of your exact status before taking an action and – if things look really bad – you can rely on Scotty or Spock to appear on the main display in person to point out any dangers or problems.

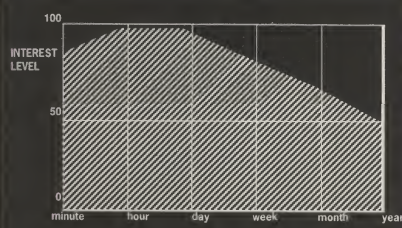
The first problem for Kirk to deal with is to manoeuvre safely the Enterprise through a 'worm hole' close to the great Barrier – with minimal energy available on board. This is

As you can see, the graphics on the PC version really do the game justice.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£24.99dk	EARLY '90
AMIGA	£24.99dk	EARLY '90
MAC	£34.99dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£34.99dk	IMMINENT

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



There is enough in it to keep you coming back for many a light year.

good practice in steering the ship – the 3D effect being created by a series of concentric circles emerging from the screen, swaying about all over the shop, causing serious damage to Enterprise should you collide with them.

It is not all bad news in the 'Worm Holes' though, as you might spot some Dilitium Crystals floating in the void which you can Tractor Beam aboard to replenish your energy supplies.

PC VERSION

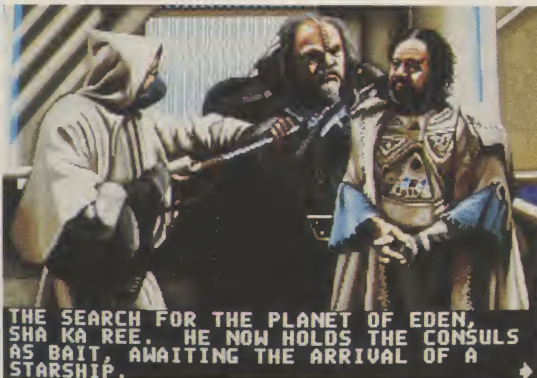
Graphics rival the Amiga and ST in VGA mode. Even EGA is pretty gasp-worthy. The gameplay is the thing, though – well thought-out to provide absorbing and challenging hours of fun. For this reason it should entertain on whatever system you have. A must for trekkies – and an entertaining space strategy/simulator for everyone else. The only let-down is the sound – but that's the PC for you.

GRAPHICS 9 IQ FACTOR 7
AUDIO 4 FUN FACTOR 8
ACE RATING 930

Not all of the action takes place aboard ship, which provides welcome relief from monitoring all of Enterprise's systems. You will in fact find yourself in hand-to-hand combat with the Klingon Commander Klaa, on the planet of Sha Ka Ree. Klaa is a tough adversary – one of the finest Klingon Commanders – but you must be careful not to kill him, capturing him instead and bringing him aboard the Enterprise to enjoy the "hospitality of the Starfleet".

The Klingon Bird of Prey is an awesome ship – far larger than the Enterprise and armed to the teeth. One of its trickiest manoeuvres is to lay a Gravitic-Planar Minefield around the Enterprise – requiring a careful use of Weapons, sensors, and Navigational controls to blow a hole in the GPM to escape. To practice some of the trickier manoeuvres required to beat the Klingon challenge a Mission Simulator is provided.

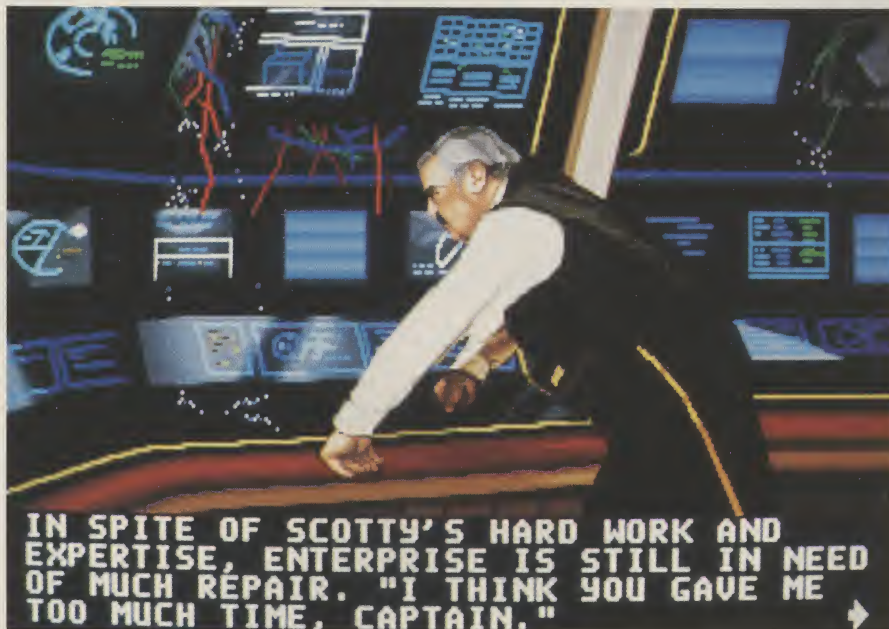
One of the best aspects of *Star Trek V* is the feeling of command over the Enterprise that is created. This is something that the earlier interpretations failed to achieve. It is the



Star Trek V – The plot of the computer game of the movie begins to unfold in glorious technicolour (on EGA in this case).

faces of Uhura, Scotty, and Spock that make the crucial difference – as well as the number of orders you can issue. Scotty, for example, can be ordered to Stand By (Cease current activity and await further orders) Fire At Will, Arm or Disarm Phasers, Raise or Lower Shields, Arm Photon Torpedoes, Damage Controls (Effect immediate Repairs) or Repeat Last Statement.

A similar level of sophistication in commands is possible with other key staff. You



"It's noo good cap'n – the engines canny take any moor..." Classic Trekkie stuff as Scotty gets down to work.

really feel as though you were in charge, with the safety of the Universe resting on your shoulders.

Graphically *Star Trek V* is superb. From the rolling intro screen with its pretty static screens that set the scene – adventure style – right through to the animation in the game itself, a high standard is maintained.

The film may not have won major accolades from the film critics but that won't matter a jot to computer-owning Trekkies – as this is easily the best interpretation of *Star Trek* yet. Mindscape have successfully gone where plenty of other software houses have regretted going – and emerged without Klingon egg on their faces.

● Eugene Lacey

'It's for yooahoo...' Yep, it's *Star Fleet* command on the line with your orders.



THE ULTIMATE

six exciting action sequences
put you in control of Elliot Ness's
elite squad of mafia-busters.

ALLEYWAY SHOOTOUTS

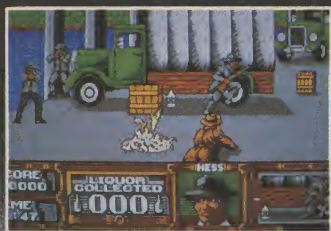
THE BORDER RAID

The Railway Station confrontation and
Warehouse bust culminating in the thrilling
denouement of a

ROOFTOP DUEL

as you re-live the knife edge existence of Ness
in his struggle against the retribution of Capone!

THE UNTOUCHABLES LIVE AN AMERICAN LEGEND



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NORTH &

Strategic
ooh-la-la
from
INFOGRAMES



SOUTH

BASED on a series of Belgian comic books entitled *Les Tuniques Bleues*, *North And South* is an interpretation of the American Civil War. The choice to play either Yankees or Confederates is yours, with the battle taking place during one of the four years of the war at one of three levels of difficulty.

However it becomes obvious from the outset that this isn't a run-of-the-mill hexagons and squares affair... A wildly animated ghost rider in the sky bugles the title tune, and being able to 'tickle' the option screen photographer's buttocks with your pointer for a 'laugh' is indicative of the general nature of the game. In translating the comic to computer, Infogrames has managed to capture the humour - and thrown in an extra mirth-making feature for good measure... namely an abundance of guffaw-inducing sound effects.

Troop movement and most of the strategic decisions take place on a single screen map of relevant American states, with the objective of removing the opposition from sight. Your priority is to occupy enough territory to establish a rail supply line and subsequently fill your safe and in turn buy new troops. Occupation of territory inhabited by enemy troops means war. A brief animated sequence of one side firing a shot into the ranks of the other is shown and the fighting commences...

Gun-toting foot soldiers, sword-bearing cavalry (complete with bugle tune) and cannons are at your disposal, with control of each transferred when appropriate. Boulders, trees, canyons and rivers disturb troop formations, but can also be used to an advantage. Out of all the *North And South*'s arcade games, the

battle sequence is the most amusing - which is fortunate as it's played the most often.

Less interesting though is the horizontally scrolling race to capture a fort when you invade a state occupied by an enemy flag. A rendition of *Yankee Doodle* plays as you run, with each note corresponding to your footsteps. Avoiding obstacles and explosives and punching soldiers is the order of the day, with a time limit represented by a 'boinging' boot (you) against the clock (tick tock). The process of hijacking an enemy train after occupying an area containing a supply line is much the same, only you perform death-defying leaps from carriage to carriage in an attempt to reach the engine.

Now all this sounds like gallons of fun - and it is. At least it is until the jokes stop being funny and it becomes apparent that there's not much room for strategic play - even when playing an strategic game (the arcade sequences are played for you). The three levels of computer controlled opponent represent a challenge, sure, but certainly not in the long term. Catastrophes (such as the Indians and Mexicans occasionally taking offence to military presence), storms (freezes troop movement for a month) and supply ships to replenish ailing forces are all very well, but none of these

aspects makes up for the small play area and limited gameplay.

North And South is rich in visual and aural quality. A comic-book feel is prevalent throughout, with select scenes appearing in panels. But there's just not enough flexibility for gameplay - playing area limited

● Brian Nesbitt

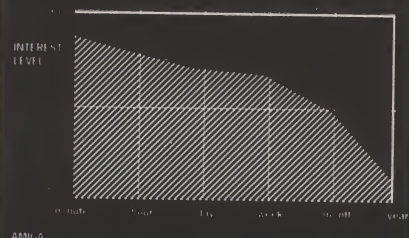
AMIGA VERSION

Exquisite presentation generates a suitable comic-book feel throughout. Stylish visuals combined with plenty of suitable sounds and jingles provide a treat for the eyes and ears, but this is inadequate compensation for the gameplay limitations. The two player head-to-head option saves the day... just.

GRAPHICS 9 IQ FACTOR 8
AUDIO 9 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 721

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Limited play area restricts lasting interest of an otherwise slick, black-humoured wargame.

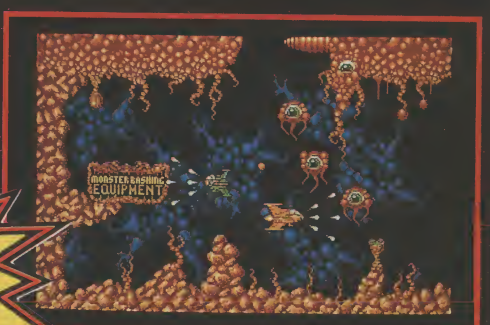
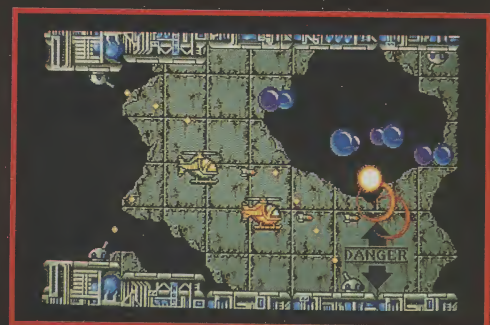
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Weight	81 Kg	Shooting	41
Pace	181	Tackling	68
		Keeping	23
		Morale	188
Dexterity	186	History	
Stamina	128	Injured	2
Resilience	149	Penal	0
Temperament	143	Goals	2
Work rate	84	Hatches	10
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NINJA WARRIORS

VIRGIN try some metallic espionage...

WHEN I mention the name *Ninja Warriors* to you, your first reaction is bound to be 'Oh, wasn't that the scrolling beat-em-up coin-op that used a three screen system similar to *Darius*?'. No? Ah well, *Ninja Warriors* isn't exactly in every arcade across the globe. But a coin-op it was, and a conversion this is.

The world is, as usual, in distress. An evil dictatorship has, as usual, overthrown the system, and everywhere, as usual, lies peril. The country's only chance is to somehow kill the dictator, but – as usual – no-one wants to draw the short straw. All the bravest men in the land lie either slain by one of the dictator's foul mutated creatures or cowering in fear. Who can save us now?

The immortal robotic Ninja Warriors, that's who. Nobody knows how they came about, or what their real purpose is, but one thing's for sure, they're the only one's who can save the day.

As a game, *Ninja Warriors* is pretty simple. You are one of the robotic warriors, at first armed with a limited supply of shuriken, who has to travel from left to right across six long scrolling levels before you reach the boss, whose throat you have to slit. Along the way you come across loads of different enemies, including hunchbacks who pack a mean punch, fire breathers with the power to disappear and appear at will and a massive sherman tank, to name but a few.

The graphics are arcade perfect, and for a game of this size, that took some clever programming (see box).

As a beat-em-up, it's great. There's lots of variety both in the backdrops and enemies, so it takes a while to get bored, and it's learnable, meaning you can get a little further every time.

A fine arcade version from the people that brought you *Silkworm* and *Continental Circus*. I can't wait to see *St. Dragon*.

● Tony Dillon

ST VERSION

Perfect coin op graphics, complete with a great soundtrack make an attractive game, and that linked with the fun you'll have playing it makes it a sure winner.

GRAPHICS	9	IQ FACTOR	4
AUDIO	7	FUN FACTOR	8
ACE RATING 830			

C64 VERSION

The graphics and sound aren't as hot as the ST, naturally, and the disk multiloop system has been dropped. Still a great looking game and a lot of fun to play...

GRAPHICS	7	IQ FACTOR	4
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	7
ACE RATING 825			

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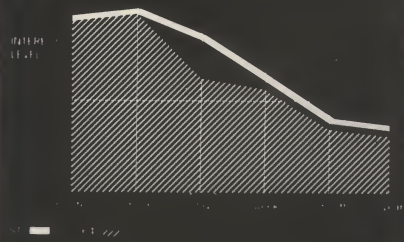
CODING CHALLENGE

Sales Curve, being the perfectionists they are, were hit with a pretty tough obstacle when they started to program the graphics for *Ninja Warriors*. There were too many of them. The backdrop, for example, never repeats, so they couldn't block it out like you can with most games, and to just place it in resident memory took too much memory, so this is what they did. By using a clever form of diskloader, the game can load in areas of backdrops and enemy sprites as it needs them, essentially making the disk drive a limited access ROM.

'We have used a similar method before on *Silkworm*', explains Dan Marchant from Sales Curve, 'On the Amiga version, the game actually loads in the end sequence as you are flying through the last level. Of course, *Ninja Warriors* is a much improved version of that, and *St. Dragon* will be a much more improved version.'

With so much extra graphic memory, Sales Curve have not only been able to take all the backdrops directly from the coin-op and scale them down to Amiga/ST resolution, they've also been able to take all the sprites, complete with all frames of animation intact, a feat never before accomplished. What you end up with is a coin-op quality looking game.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



The graphics of the ST version, plus the slightly lower difficulty level makes it just a touch longer lasting than the 64 incarnation.



OMNICRON CONSPIRACY

IMAGEWORKS conspire to bring US humour to British adventurers...

THERE seems to be a trend in the states at the moment for zany adult adventures in which the emphasis is clearly on light-hearted gameplay and off-beat humour. Sierra On-line have probably explored this genre to a greater extent than most development teams, with titles like *Leisure Suit Larry*.

Now First Star Software have made a contribution with *Omnicron Conspiracy*. You take on the persona of Ace Powers, a star police captain who has been assigned the task of investigating an inter-galactic drug ring. You begin aboard your ship, where your PAL (Personal Automatic Link) informs you that your presence is desired on Cron by the planet's chief of police.

After arriving at Cron you are escorted by the rather short-tempered Lieutenant Drek to the hyper-lift which takes you to the Chief's office. Once there you are given the bad news. The previous agent investigating the evil drugs ring has gone missing. You must pick up the trail and bust the dealers. From here on in it's up to you to follow up all the clues that are liberally strewn in your path.

Like the Sierra adventures, *Omnicron Conspiracy* is fully animated. Movement is achieved by using either joystick or keyboard to get your character from room to room. Unlike Sierra's stuff, however, there is no text entry – all decisions are made by selecting options from a menu. Move into an object or



Ace stands on the bridge of the Falcon with his trust P.A.L. and his plasma cannon tucked safely away in his trousers.

character, press Enter, and a menu appears with two or three possible courses of action, which change depending on your situation. One of the most useful options is CONVERSE, which allows you to glean useful tidbits from anyone you might encounter. You have six pockets which can be used for storing collected items, although your ALSWELL (Automatic Laser System with Energy Light Load) should permanently occupy one of these if you want to last long. Activating any of the six pockets again calls up a menu of options.

Finding uses for most of the objects is not too difficult. There are also one or two in there that are just for fun. Try popping into the CD shop on Cron and inserting a disk into the CD player. By far the most useful item is your Alswell. This can be set to either stun or kill (just like the old Star Trek phasers).

Eliminating other characters is simply a matter of facing them and hitting the space bar and they are instantly frazzled. Of course there is also the great danger that you will meet with much the same treatment. I was most affront-



Ugh! Lots of dead green men in the hallway... must've been some party!

ed when, on wandering into a bar, I was accosted by some ugly green guy whose idea of a friendly greeting was a few laser shots to the belly. Fortunately, if such a disaster should occur, your P.A.L. droid can beam you back to the ship and have you reassembled by the Nurse droid. Following a successful reassembly, I marched straight back to the bar and fried the pig before he could get a word in edgewise. Very satisfying indeed!

You should actually find yourself solving the first part of the game quite easily, but the drugs bust is only the tip of the iceberg. There are, in fact, two further mysteries to be solved before you have properly completed the game.

I quite liked *Omicron Conspiracy*. The very American humour does grate from time to time, but on the whole the game is good fun. The graphical interface that has been used in favour of text entry is going to make the game accessible to the sort of people who otherwise wouldn't touch it with a barge pole. The graphics and animation actually have a slight edge on the Sierra games, although the sound is severely restricted. This is certainly not going to be everybody's cup of tea, but if you're not turned off by software that has a very American feel to it, then it should be worth a look.

● Laurence Scottford

PC VERSION

The animation and graphics have a lot of character and give the game a very off-beat feel. Sound is fairly limited, as we've come to accept from PC games. It plays well though and should appeal to more people than a lot of adventures.

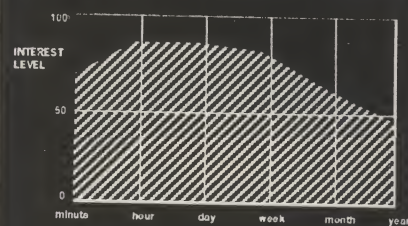
GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 8
AUDIO 5 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 780

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



PC
Should provide reasonably challenging entertainment for some time.

St. Louis

Hawaii

Paris

Tokyo

World of Flight

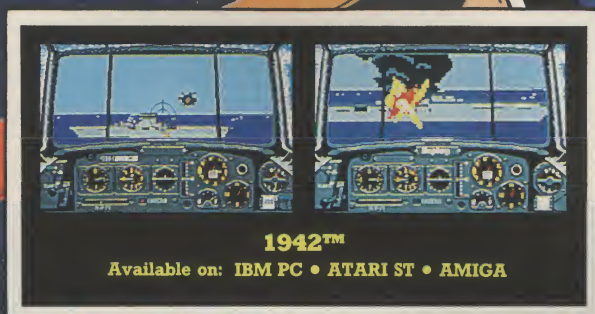
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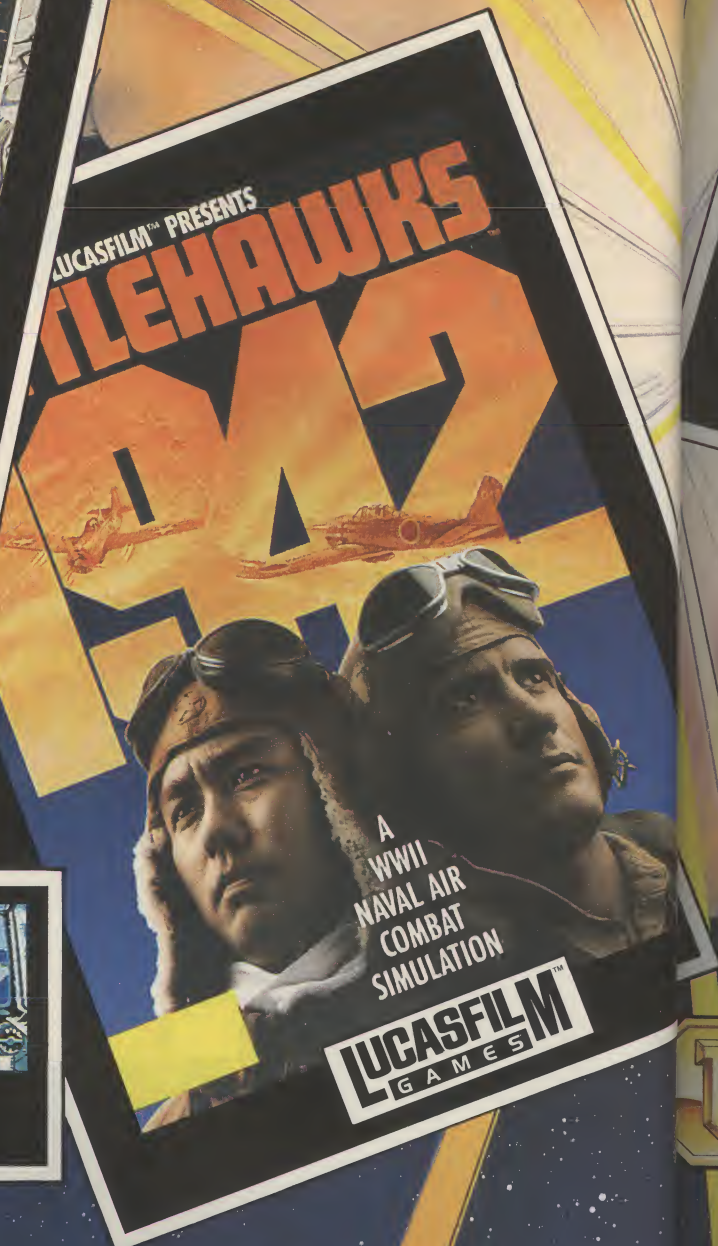
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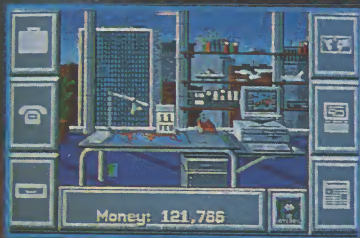
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Screen shots from Amiga version



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 SOFTWARE

DOUBLE DRAGON II

AFTER the truly appalling home computer version of *Double Dragon*, it seemed only right for Virgin to knock the idea of the sequel on the head. Sadly though it was a case of an already bought licence, so here it is.

Once more the *Double Dragon* duo set out to right wrongs and rescue people by using their immense karate skills to cause as much damage as possible, usually to the street gangs. At their disposal they have flying kicks, a battery of punches and a rather nasty backflip which leaves the recipient with their eyes bulging if you get my meaning. In order to preserve their livelihood and their manhood as the case may be, some members of the gangs have armed themselves with daggers, chains and in some cases guns. Luckily for the Dragon brothers, it's possible for them to pick up weapons dropped by beaten opponents and then use them instead of punches. If anything the punch is the most effective move, but the ability to use other weapons helps break the monotony.

Another feature which helps to lighten the game is a little routine which allows you to give your own partner a kicking. Unfortunately look-alikes of the Dragon brothers wander on to the screen from time to time to confuse matters, often resulting in the wrong player being on the end of a right bruising.

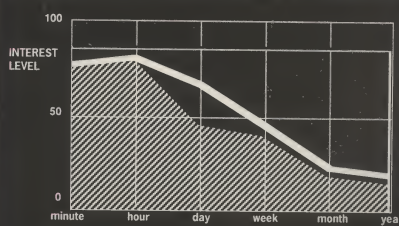
Each level is a traditional left to right scroller with a large end of level bad guy (in some cases bad guys) doing their best to reduce you and your pal to pulp. If you should win, the drive whirrs and it's on to the next level, with a very similar selection of baddies, very similar indeed.

The differences between *Double Dragon* and its sequel in the arcades were only minor, a few backdrops, a few sprites. But the change

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Fun, but lacks any real endurance, especially on a one player game.

which had to take place on the computer versions needed to be enormous. Thankfully Virgin realised the potential of this game for a the home market and appear to have pulled out all

the stops. The graphics have been greatly improved - now larger, better defined, and smoother. When there are a lot of characters on the screen the action hardly slows, but it's the action itself that proves to be one of the faltering points.

An arcade machine has obvious advantages over a home computer, therefore games which appear in your local arcade are going to be head and shoulders above any conversion. In the case of *Double Dragon II* the arcade game featured very smooth moving sprites, complex animation routines, and more colour to handle. The 16-bit versions on the other hand have had to have the colour reduced, some of the graphics shrunk, and fails to play as fast as the original, losing most of the frantic feel which made the arcade machine such a hit. It's in cases like this that a game is not so much of a conversion, more of a re-write.

People who are not familiar with the arcade version should give it a look as it provides lots and lots of indiscriminate beat-em-up action with a good two player mode. Hard core fans of the coin-op are unlikely to be impressed though.

● Mark Patterson

AMIGA VERSION

The most noticeable fact is the use of the full screen facility. In most cases this helps to provide a more arcade like feel. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a real perspective effect on the backdrops, the effect is somewhat lost. Unlike the arcade and ST version, the screen only scrolls left.

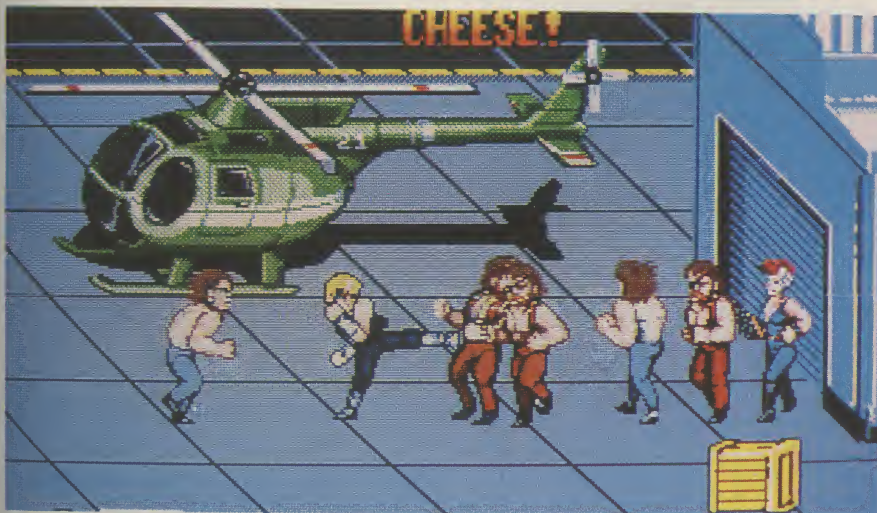
GRAPHICS 7 IQ FACTOR 5
AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 7
ACE RATING 720

ST VERSION

Out of the two versions I've seen, this can claim to be the closest to the original. The graphics are essentially the same as the Amiga version, large and brightly coloured, though the backdrops have changed and have a nice forced perspective look to them. A game that is greatly enhanced by the two player mode.

GRAPHICS 7 IQ FACTOR 5
AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 7
ACE RATING 725

Kick, punch, and generally make a nuisance of yourself in *Double Dragon*...



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BOMBER

Activision drop a bombshell on the flight-sim scene



Aerial refueling has to be mastered to complete the more difficult missions.



You need a cast iron stomach to make this raid on an enemy base.

If fourteen of the best military aircraft from around the world - including an F16 Falcon, F14 Tomcat, Mig-29, Saab AJ37, Mirage 2000 and F15E Strike Eagle - in one sim sounds too good to be believed, then you haven't seen Activision's *Fighter Bomber* yet.

All of the fourteen planes are shown in side view on the selection panel. A 3D view of your chosen plane can be selected, which enables you to view it from all angles as it turns circle in a window of the selection screen. You can also flick through the wide range of armaments that are available - and these, too, look accurate in every detail. There is a price to be paid for these multifarious game options though - you lose some of the detailed flight controls you get in mainstream sims of the Spectrum Holobyte ilk. But who cares about things like Cockpit Air Pressure, Altitude to the nearest millimeter, or Estimated Time of Arrival at the target? You get there right, you deal shit right,

you get out right. *Fighter Bomber* delivers these three key ingredients in no less than sixteen different missions of progressive difficulty.

The Missions are divided into four categories: Covert, Tactical, Strategic and Offensive. After a brief jaunt around Mount Rushmore in 'Free Flight' to get the hang of the controls and have a look at some scenery, you soon hunger after your first mission - Operation Sleeper. The briefing screen informs you that a group of terrorists are holed up in a mountain valley - 60 Km south east of an airforce base. Your mission is to fly in low and take out the terrorists with an "appropriate weapon".

Before setting out on a mission you have the option to look at a video recording of a reconnaissance mission. This is a first for flight games, and a most useful feature. Study every detail of the map as it will help you remember what the target area looks like. In the case of

the terrorists, you can get in really close and see their tents and jeeps nestling at the foot of a mountain range; sitting ducks just waiting to taste the heat of your F14's cannon or Maverick missiles.

The details of each mission are only revealed at the briefings, though the objectives are hinted at in the manual, which lists them in true fighter pilot language with names like 'Spearchucker', 'Sam Smasher', 'Big Bird' and 'Molestrangler'.

Although the missions start off easily enough - with an advanced fighter bomber taking out a small terrorist cell - they quickly get a lot more difficult. You come up against real enemies with jet fighters of their own. Careful consideration must be given to fuel limitations, refuelling in mid air, and weapon selection - which all need to be mastered if you are to complete the more difficult missions in the 'Strategic' and 'Offensive' categories.



Enemy aircraft in view and just about to be blasted with Maverick missiles.

But Vector Graphix have included a device to keep even the hottest computer Ace's satisfied - a mission design facility.

Another highlight of this excellent flight game is the design feature, enabling you to create and save your own missions every bit as complex as the sixteen predesigned missions that come with the game. Everything can be put in, even the mission briefing.

Flight controls are simple - but responsive and convincing enough to let you lose your self in the game. Whilst in the air you can choose from eleven different views, including a view from the Control Tower, view from enemy aircraft and view your own plane. The view your own plane option is particularly nice - to see your task completed and the target reduced to so much rubble, just sit back and watch the movie.

The aerial dog fights are competent, but lack the manoeuvrability and sophistication of *Falcon*. But this does not matter as the dog-fighting is not the be all and end of all of the game anyway - it's a mere part of the mission, and the game in its entirety has entertainment and playability value in abundance.

A thorough manual provides all you need to know about the various aircraft featured in the game. Brief details, rather than page after

page of unnecessary description, and a quick and easy guide to get you into the action, rather than putting you to sleep before you have your first go.

Fighter Bomber seems certain to elevate Vector Graphix to the big league of games development. They spent a long time on this one - and it certainly shows. The game gets the balance just right between convincing simulation and entertaining game. Highly recommended.

● Eugene Lacey

PC VERSION

The 3D graphics are totally convincing - even when the plane banks and spins out of control. For a PC it also moves pretty swiftly, depending to a large extent on the power of your machine. But the design of *Fighter Bomber* is so strong that it should work well on most machines - including the Spectrum and C64. Sound lets it down a bit - an F14 Tomcat's after burner sounds a bit like a wasp with a soar throat. But then that's the PC for you.

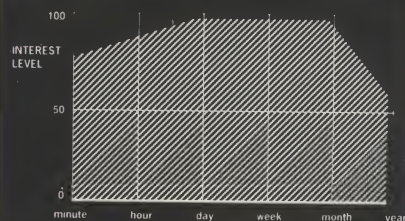
GRAPHICS 9 IQ FACTOR 9
AUDIO 5 FUN FACTOR 9

ACE RATING 925

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



PC
The pre-packed missions will keep you busy for months - the design your own feature will keep you busy for years. Highly ACE



Fighter Bomber - more of a game than a straight simulation.

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they are
obliterated
by an evil
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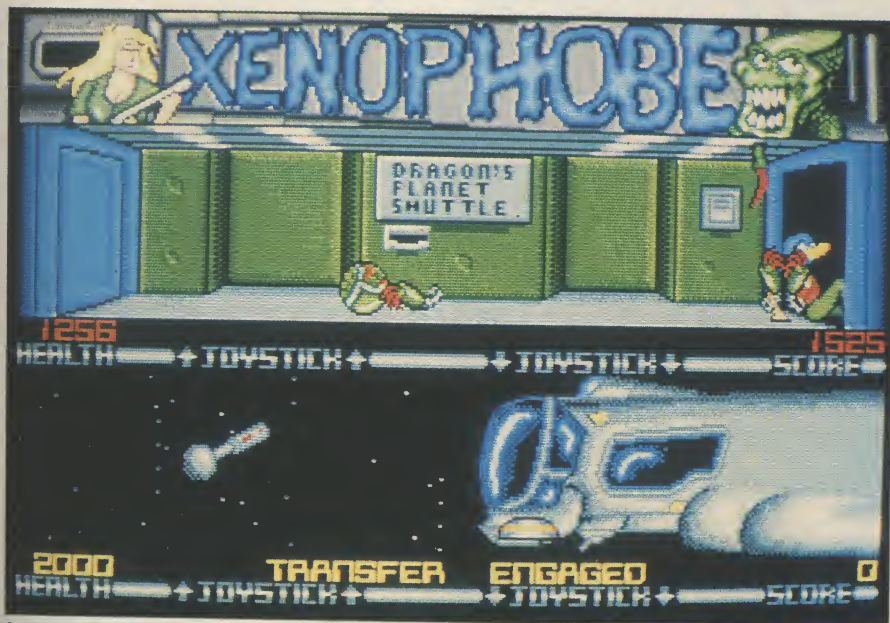
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XENOPHOBE

MICROPROSE

kill all known

ALFs – DEAD.



In one-player mode, you can choose any one of nine characters and face the might of the evil Xenos alone. As you can see, the display area isn't large

A Xenophobe, just in case you didn't know, is someone who has a hatred of foreigners; in the case of this game, it's someone who gets the willies every time they come across an alien. And who wouldn't? Pull the trigger first and attempt the alien lingo later is a motto that's safeguarded many a pioneering space cadet.

Xenophobe is also a fairly mediocre Bally Midway coin-op of the same name, now a couple of years old and at its best with more than one player. It depicts a future Earth at war with itself until mysterious waves of bug-eyed monsters (known, appropriately enough, as Xenos) infiltrated the Solar System. A cynical space

mercenary called Schickn is sent to investigate Space Station Zero One Five, now occupied by things from another world.

Basically, this is a one- or two-player game which involves you choosing one of nine crew members and materialising on the space station of your choice ready to kick some bug-eyed monster ass. There are plenty of different aliens, including pernicious pods, cutey critters and garrotting tentacles – but in practice they're not significantly different.

You can also pick up plenty of weapons, including a pretty handy laser pistol (just about the most satisfying), bombs, lightning rifle and – the Trekkies' favourite – a phaser. If you drop your weapon, another one will be left by a droid, but in the meantime you can engage in some good old fashioned fisticuffs.

There are three outcomes of all this alien-bashing. If you let the bad guys overrun the base, it self-destructs after you've returned to the mothership. Alternatively, you can order a 'fast destruct' to prevent it from being overrun by Xenos. Finally, clear the base of ALFs (a percentage of aliens remaining is occasionally shown on the walls behind you) and you can troll off to the next. This means more multi-loading, which can be a pain if you want to get

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C64 VERSION

The graphics and sound do nothing to compensate for the tedium of a slow loader and dull gameplay. Ten quid is a lot to pay for a brilliant soundtrack tape and a dull game, and even fans of the coin-op should be wary of this conversion.

GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	6
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	3
ACE RATING 492			

straight back into the action.

There are several things wrong with *Xenophobe*, not least of which is the multiloader. It's bad enough having to reload a disk to reset the options (number of players; music/sound effects; starting level), so there isn't much hope for the cassette version. Another niggle is the one-player mode – you get about a third of the screen to play in, whilst the word 'Xenophobe' bounces around and flashes annoyingly beneath you.

The worst aspect, though, is the monotony. Walking from room to similar room blasting aliens, picking up discarded hardware and blasting more aliens becomes very tedious, since there's very little inter-level variety. However, before you go thinking this is a complete waste of time, one thing has to be said in its favour: the free music cassette that comes with the package is excellent – one of the best you'll find. If only the same could be said for the game.

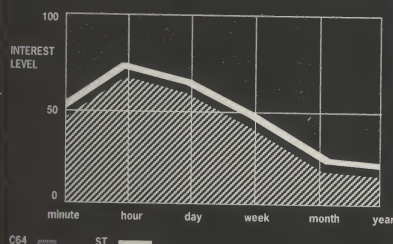
● Gordon Houghton

ST VERSION

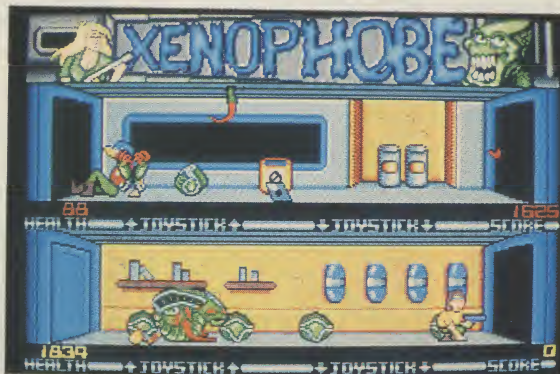
Better performance than the C64 version. Graphics and sound are both reasonably slick, although the machine is not really stretched in either department. Playability, however, remains a problem.

GRAPHICS	6	IQ FACTOR	6
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	3
ACE RATING 585			

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Once you start working out what to do, it's good fun for a while, but even with two players this soon leads to boredom.



Many hands make light work, and a couple of exterminators make alien soup of the opposition. If you've got a friend (everyone has one somewhere), this is by far the best way to play *Xenophobe*

STORMLORD



Where Eagles Dare — Stormlord cadges a quick lift from helpful Mael Ovin!

IT has been a long time since I have come across a game that has got it right in just about every department. So very often development teams spend a long time getting graphics and sound down to a tee and then disappoint us with the gameplay. Alternatively the game will play really well, but the visuals let it down in a big way.

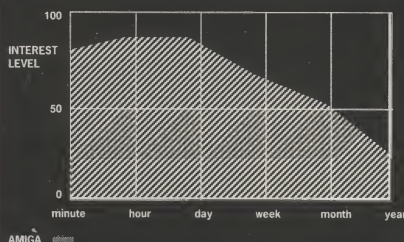
The first impression you receive from Stormlord is one of graphical excellence. A pretty title screen leads you on to a dark and mysterious two-dimensional landscape full of superbly animated creatures. Then when the

AMIGA VERSION

Great graphics, great sound, and great gameplay. It's all too easy to drastically under use the Amiga in conversions of 8-bit games, but Hewson have obviously gone to a lot of trouble to ensure that *Stormlord* really uses all of the advanced features of this machine, making this version look like a completely new game.

GRAPHICS 8 IQ FACTOR 6
AUDIO 8 FUN FACTOR 8
ACE RATING 860

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A very good game, but the challenge won't last for long.

Hewson is set to take 16-bit games by storm

But the merits of Stormlord do not stop here by any means. There is actually a very playable and addictive game behind all the effects. As a measure of Stormlord's excellence, it took a lot of willpower for me to drag myself away from the machine to write this review. Often I'm only to happy to head for the nearest word processor.

Raffaella Cecco's original version of the game was first seen in May on 8-bit formats, and was well-received at the time. It is nice to see that, rather than producing mediocre 16-bit conversions and riding on the success of the 8-bit programs, Hewson have gone to the trouble to ensure that the advanced features of 16-bit machines are used to the full.

The scenario involves the rescue of the imprisoned faery folk and the subsequent delivery of the land from the rule of the evil queen. If that sounds a little twee don't worry, Stormlord has its fair share of monster mashing for those who enjoy that sort of thing.

You play the Stormlord of the title, a very Nordic looking type with full beard and flowing cape. Quick presses of the fire button will have him throw fireballs. These are not too powerful, so some creatures may need several hits to destroy them. Hold the fire button for slightly longer and the Stormlord fires swords in a manner similar to the knight in Ghosts and Goblins.

▼ The unclad faery evokes a wolf whistle if you cross her with sound effects on.

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great soundtrack reaches your ears you know you're in for an audio-visual treat.

That fact alone would probably be enough to ensure that this title sells fairly well, especially since many reviewers can easily be won over by a few pretty pics and tuneful ditties.



lins. These are far more effective, but can't be fired quite as frequently.

Each of the faeries is trapped in a bubble and all you need to do is touch this to release them. Unfortunately there are various hazards to be overcome in order to reach the captives. These include collapsing platforms, Venus flytraps, giant worms, and an assortment of other deadly creatures. Most are fairly easy to dispatch provided you are in the right place at the right time.

Although making mincemeat of monsters is a major part of the game, there is another aspect which must be mastered if you are to make any progress. This involves the various objects which can be found lying around. You must find out through trial and error which object you need to be carrying at which time. This inevitably costs a few lives but, once you have discovered what you need to be carrying and when, it is simply a matter of practising till you get the timing and technique right.

One very nice feature in the game is the way you can travel quickly between distant locations. We've all seen boring old transporter pads before, but how's this for originality. Step on one of the stone blocks scattered throughout the level and a giant Eagle, Mael Ovin, will swoop down and carry you off to another block located elsewhere. It looks very impressive, and really shows off the smooth and fast horizontal scrolling.

If you do manage to rescue all the faeries on a level before your nine lives have all been used up then you are allowed to play a sub-game. In this the faeries all fly above you and you must try and blow kisses at them to make them fall in love (aaahh!). If you manage to hit a



Stormlord is about to burst the bubble and release the first faery, but he had better be quick; if that wizard's bolt hits him it's gonna hurt!

faery with a kiss she will shed a tear for you to collect. Collect ten tears before your time or kisses run out and you are awarded an extra life.

This is actually not as easy as it sounds since the faeries move quite rapidly and the tears often dissolve before you manage to reach them. Still, it does provide an interlude between the main levels which adds a bit more interest to the game.

The graphics are absolutely brilliant and really can't be faulted in any respect. The quality of both the animation and the scrolling has

to be seen to be believed. The soundtrack is also one of the best I have heard for a while, but even if you do get tired of it you can replace it with some amusing sound effects.

There are six levels to complete in the game. You will find the first couple of levels reasonably easy, but I suspect that later levels might prove frustratingly difficult. Hewson have certainly lived up to their reputation for excellence with this title, all I can say in conclusion is: buy it — you won't be disappointed!

● Laurence Scotford

CTW Survey '89 CTW Survey

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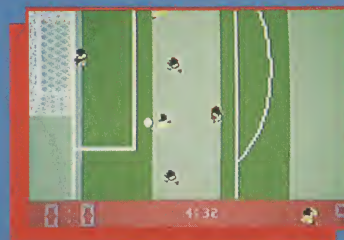
PLAYING IT IS EASY - MASTERING IT WILL TAKE TIME - A LOT OF TIME



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DAY OF THE PHARAOH

STRATEGY / Management games were always popular projects on early micros because they were easy to implement, and did not heavily rely on complicated graphics and sound. They usually had very broad, unimaginative names like Kingdom, Dictator, or Millionaire, and put you into the sort of position where you had to make important day to day decisions in order to retain, or increase your current status.

The games progressed as a series of turns, each of which represented a period of time, like a day, week, or month. On each turn you had to make a number of decisions related to various aspects of your position. These might be financial or business decisions, or possibly affairs of state. At any rate your success or otherwise depended on how well you made those vital choices. Day of the Pharaoh's roots are firmly in the Management/Strategy genre. Unlike those simple, early games, however, it offers a lot more.

Things are going badly wrong in Egypt. The old Pharaoh has gone and snuffed it leaving a lot of nasty power-hungry types ready to step into his shoes. This horrible lot are being led on by the evil god Seth, who orders them to kill off all of the Pharaoh's descendents, in return for which, they will inherit the throne.

You happen to be one of the rightful heirs to the throne, but, unlike your unlucky relatives, you are saved from drowning in the Nile by the Sun God Amon-Re. You grow up as a prince amongst paupers, unaware of your true destiny until one night the god Osiris (yeah, there's quite a few of these guys) appears to you in a dream and leaves you with silver and a single merchant ship. Your task is to be succesful enough as a merchant trader to rise through the Egyptian social ranks and eventually retake the throne.

The major part of the game is trading. To do this you must travel the Nile to reach various towns. This is where the first of several sub-games comes in. Once you have selected

Take a quick trip
down the Nile,
courtesy of
Rainbow Arts.



Oh dear, things have gone badly wrong, and you're off to meet Seth in person.

your destination, a view of the prow of your ship appears bouncing forward through the water. You must now steer it through the rocks that come towards you with alarming rapidity. Hit too many rocks and you'll lose half your cargo - not very helpful!

You may also have to deal with theiving phoenicians (or 'phenicians' as the programmers spell it!). These nasty blighters raid your ship after a bit of successful trading and the only way to stop them is by whacking them over the head with one of the ships oars, which takes a bit of mastering.

Once you have built up a good stock of commodities you can engage in a some more prestigious activities. These include honouring one of the gods, or taking a wife, both of which will require you to have fairly substantial offerings to hand. In the later stages of the game you can also indulge in a little architecture, although you really will have to be a big-wig before this is possible.

If sensible trading is too slow for you it is also possible to lay the occasional wager on a camel race. Beware though, we are talking big stakes here - nobody in these parts wagers anything less than a whole shipful of cargo.

Even if you are trading fairly well, not everything is all sunshine and roses - you will inevitably have to deal with the occasional conflict. If you are to cope with these effectively you must have a good line up of war chariots. Each conflict involves another sub-game in which you control a charioteer and an accom-

panying archer. Your aim is to fell as many of the enemy as possible without being hit yourself. Like the phoenician sub-game, this takes a little while to get used to.

Day of the pharaoh is an unusual conglomeration of simple arcade-type sequences and more involved strategy/management type gameplay. Graphically, the whole thing is up to Rainbow Arts usual degree of excellence. Menus and messages are presented on authentic looking pieces of papyrus, or scrolls. Sound is limited to the occasional spot effect, although what there is has been done quite well.

One very nice feature is that you can freely swap between the mouse, keyboard, and joystick at any stage of the game. This turns out to be very useful indeed because you use the mouse while you are selecting from menus, then change to the joystick for action sequences. Rainbow Arts have obviously gone to a lot of time and trouble to make Day of the Pharaoh as appealing as possible while retaining as many of the qualities of those old strategy games as they could. The resulting game, however, doesn't quite hang together. The individual elements are all very nice, but as a whole I don't think there's enough here to keep your interest for long.

● Laurence Scotford

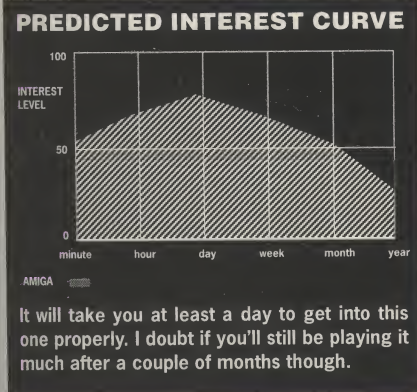
AMIGA VERSION

Day of the Pharaoh looks quite sexy on the Amiga, although it obviously isn't stretching the machine that much. I won't be surprised if the game looks and plays exactly the same on the ST. If you are a hardened shoot-em-up addict, then this game will do nothing for you whatsoever. Those of you who enjoy putting the brain in gear from time to time might be advised to take a look though.

GRAPHICS	7	IQ FACTOR	7
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	5
ACE RATING 625			

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DOGS OF WAR

Mercenary Elite go to war again...



Ready to select weapons for yet another bloody campaign

IT seems to me that Elite's most successful titles have always been those that are the least complex and rely most on addictive gameplay. *Kokotoni Wilf*, *Bombjack*, *Bombjack II*, *Ghosts and Goblins* - remember those? The one thing that characterised them all was that they were games you would quite happily come back to time and time again, but they didn't necessarily have either graphics or sound that competed with some of the other big titles around at the time.

The funny thing is that they didn't really need lots of frilly bits. The actual design of each game was good enough to carry it alone. Add larger, more colourful sprites and more complex sound, and you would probably end up with a slower, less playable, and ultimately less appealing game.

Another title that falls into this category is *Ikari Warriors*: Tiny squat figures running around firing dots and little circles at each other. It doesn't exactly sound like a winner does it? But it was actually one hell of a chart-topping success. It was also another one of

those games that was perfect as it was. So what if it didn't have the greatest graphics or sound of the century, it was still a very enjoyable, and above all, addictive game.

What Elite have gone and done now is enlisted the master of *Ikari Warrior* clones, Steve Bak, to produce - guess what? Another *Ikari Warrior* clone. You are a mercenary trying to make your fortune by accepting contracts from various organisations and individuals. These involve either the recovery of

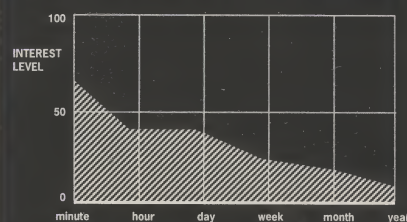
stolen objects or kidnapped and imprisoned persons, or the annihilation of unwanted ones.

You begin with a small amount of capital and once you have accepted a mission you must use this to buy any weaponry and ammunition you need. This is done by placing a cursor over the images of the items you wish to acquire. The cost of the item is deducted automatically from your balance. This is fine to begin with - the ability to tailor your firepower should add some extra interest to a rather hackneyed theme. Unfortunately the implementation of this feature leaves a lot to be desired. If you want more than one quantity of a particular item you have to hold the fire button down until you have as many as you require. When you are stocking up on ammunition this becomes very tedious.

The other problem is that you have to go through this rigmarole at the start of each mission, even if you want exactly the same combination of weapons. It would have been nice to have the option of saving favourite weapons combinations which could be selected instantly instead of having to rebuild the selection from scratch.

When you do actually get into the game itself, you should survive just long enough to realise that it looks very much like *Ikari Warriors*, but plays nothing like it. Although the objectives and the way that you play the game are largely the same, *Dogs of War* just doesn't play as well. The game actually relies on the effective use of a combination of weapons to

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



It looks like it might be a winner at first, but it doesn't have the lasting appeal of *Ikari Warriors*.

RELEASE BOX

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deal with different sections of the game. While an SMG might be superbly useful in the opening stages of each game, it is less than useless when you are confronted by a couple of huge armoured vehicles.

The way that you actually swap the weapon in use is by tapping the left side of the keyboard. This cycles through the weapons you possess. In theory this is fine, but in practise it doesn't work very well. If you have, say, a machine gun for slaughtering ordinary troops, a handful of grenades to clear behind walls, and a rocket launcher for putting armoured vehicles out of action, you may need a couple of key presses before you get exactly what you want. By the time you have the correct weapon called up and fired you have been splattered to the four winds.

The pace of the game is so fast, and the opposition so strong that even without the awkward weapon swapping you are going to have a hard time surviving. I suspect that the game will actually prove a lot more playable if you use the simultaneous two-player option. As far as solo play is concerned, be prepared for many frustrating hours trying to last longer than five minutes.

I can see what Elite are trying to do here, and in part I think this is a good effort. The choice of missions is a good idea, although to be honest the appeal here lies mainly in the change of background graphics. The choice of weapons too could have been a good feature, but because of the reasons I have pointed out, becomes more of an annoyance than anything else. What you have in *Dogs of War* is essentially *Ikari Warriors* with bells and whistles, but unfortunately the bells and whistles only succeed in detracting from the original concept of the game.

● Laurence Scotford

ATARI ST VERSION

There's not really a lot between this and the Amiga version. Yep, it's one of those games that has been developed across both machines in an identical fashion. See the Amiga box for comments.

GRAPHICS 6 IQ FACTOR 2
AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 6

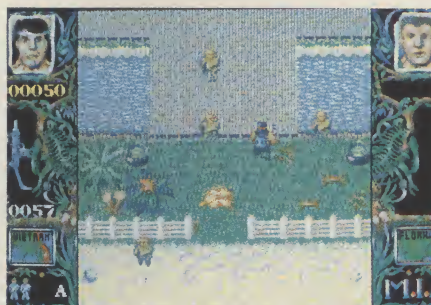
ACE RATING 650

AMIGA VERSION

Graphics are an improvement on those in the 16-bit version of *Ikari Warriors*, and there is a bearable soundtrack by Dave Whitaker. Playability wise this is not up to *Ikari* standards, but if you have someone else to hand for a two-player game, then it might be worth taking a look...

GRAPHICS 6 IQ FACTOR 2
AUDIO 6 FUN FACTOR 6

ACE RATING 650



It's hardly 'Bridge over the river Kwai'!

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GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

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Screen shots from Atari ST version.

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Cloud Master comes up against a mid-level nasty riding a rival cloud. He is spewing mega-flak and is determined to stop you getting into that temple.

About half way through level one Cloud Master comes up against an adversary on a cloud. Almost impossible to blast off his cloud without at least two power-ups this nasty has the annoying habit of doing a fly past - guns blazing - every time he gets the better of you.

Get past this mid-point and a window opens up in the upper floor of a Buddhist temple. Go inside and take your pick from a choice of four super weapons. Whatever you pick, the computer comes up with "ah, yes, a very good choice".

I found the four revolving balls of flame to be the most effective in your encounter with the first end of level nasty, which follows shortly after your visit to the temple.

This nasty will crack you up. A giant hen, beautifully drawn, and again graphically superior to many other end of level guardians from 16-bit games. This hen is no chicken (Sorry), very tough in fact, spitting mouthfuls of darts at you and taking several hits to kill. To best the end of level baddies you need to manoeuvre constantly to avoid the flak as well as continually pumping the fire button. Nice and tough, just as it should be.

There are five levels in total. Mount Gyogo is followed by the River Kwo, and then then three other levels of increasing difficulty. As you float though the levels on your cloud you are far from lonely as you as machine gun totting pigs take pot shots at you - and someone, or something, is flinging pigs and cats heads at you from the right of the screen, just out of view.

This is a welcome addition to the Sega's shoot'em-up catalogue. The only other decent horizontal blaster is *R-Type* - which was a bit glitchy and perhaps too much for the SMS to handle. *Cloud Master* is just right - fast, pretty, and tough.

ACE RATING 845

● Eugene Lacey



Inside the temple you get the choice of four super weapons.

MOUNT Gyogo is a very weird place. A high mountain range dotted with Buddhist temples and some very strange creatures.

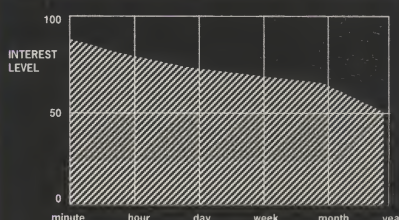
This beautiful mountain provides the scrolling terrain for *Cloud Master*, the latest horizontal shoot'em-up for the Sega. At first glance it is easy to get the impression that you are looking at an Amiga or ST game - so sharp and colourful are the graphics. This sharpness is created by a black line around all the objects on screen, giving the impression of cartoon animation.

The enhanced graphics and depth of game play are due to a new more powerful type of cartridge with greater memory, now being used by Sega in some of the latest Master System games.

The game itself offers nothing new, apart from its weird characters and the addictiveness of its game play. A tough shoot'em-up with the ubiquitous end of level nasties that seem to absorb endless amounts of Cloud Master bullets before blowing.

Our red hairedd Japanese-looking hero - bearing an uncanny resemblance to Wonder Boy - sails through the five levels of the game aboard a fluffy white cloud

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Addictive shoot'em-up that will take some time to clock.

RELEASE BOX

SEGA	£24.95dk	OUT NOW
------	----------	---------



End of level one nasty, or turkey even.



The pace increases on level two as Cloud Master gets ready for the mad monkeys.

WANTED

SEGA wants you Dead or Alive...

WANTED is a wild west shoot-'em-up for the Master System. Take your trusty Light Phaser six shooter off the shelf, strap it onto your holster, hop on your 'hoss, and go gunning for law braking cowboys in Tombstone City.

The gang members up from behind barrels and appear in windows taking pot shots at you and then ducking back sown again. You need to be quick on the draw to bag them. Other cowboys are more sneaky, pulling a gun on you as they stroll nonchalantly along the side walk.

Your Light Phaser has an unlimited amount of bullets but your energy metre does not - and inches slowly, but surely, towards zero if you swallow too much lead.

Graphics are bright and colourful and there is a nice ricochet sound as the bullets fly around Tombstone. If you survive the shoot out with the gang members you will come up against a final show down the gang leader at the end of level one.

Other levels offer a shooting gallery where you can get some target practice and earn

bonus points by shooting the bottles, glasses and saloon ash trays that scroll past on a conveyor belt.

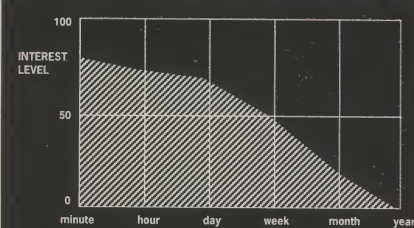
Later in the game is a neat desert scene with giant cacti and tall mountain peaks as the shoot out rages on horse back.

A must for Light Phaser owners.

ACE RATING 635

● Eugene Lacey

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Amusing wild west fun, but no classic

RELEASE BOX

SEGA	£19.95dk	OUT NOW
------	----------	---------



Wanted - quick draw shoot 'em up for Light Phaser owners.



Shoot the barrells to find the hidden bombs. These are cowboy smart bombs.

CONSOLE NEWS

Console racers
gear up for
next year

Console owners may be feeling a bit left behind with the biggest range of home computer racing games ever launched about to hit the shelves this Christmas.

ACE's advice is to take heart as a whole range of console racers is in the Japanese pipeline - and should hit these shores early in the new year.



Amongst the tiles on the way are *Out Run* for the PC Engine, *Turbo Out Run* for the Mega

Drive, and *Power Drift* for the Sega Master System.

Nintendo racers are still thin

◀ **Turbo Outrun** - shortly to appear on Sega Mega Drive.

on the ground - as are most Nintendo games - but this, too, should improve with the New Year. There are stacks of good racers in the Nintendo catalogue including *Road Blasters*, *Chase HQ*, *Super Sprint* and *Super Trux*. At least one of these should be available in the first part of 1990.



Power Drift for Sega shortly.

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SOFTWARE

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SUPERB STRATEGY GAME

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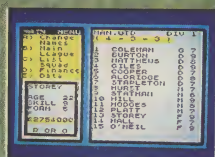
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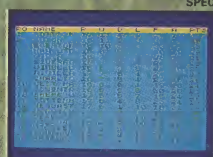
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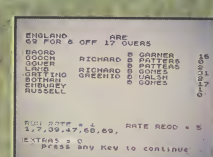
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BATTING & BOWLING ANALYSIS



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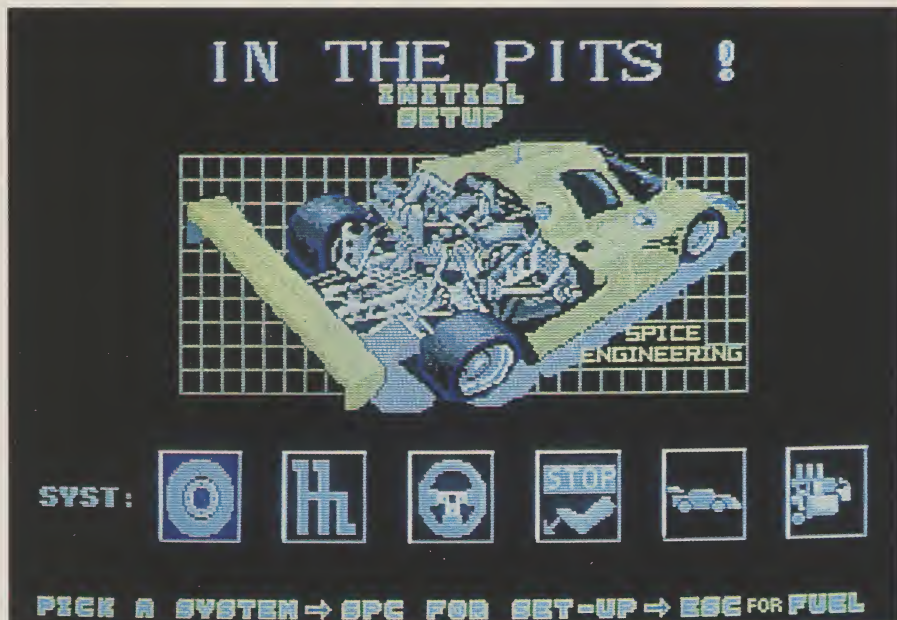
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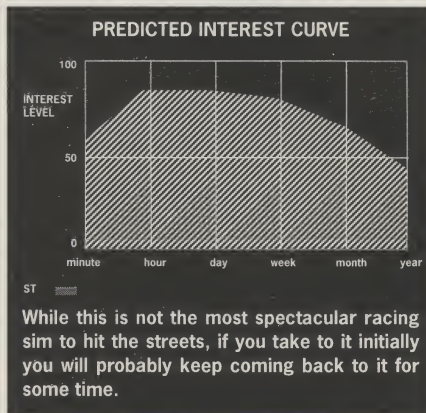


Better than your average pit-stop. You can change anything up to the angle of your spoilers - impressive!

RACING games have been popular, it seems, right from misty beginnings of video game technology. Pole position was probably the first really successful racing game to hit the arcades, and soon spawned a plethora of clones, both in the arcades and on home computer formats. Early efforts on micros, like Psion's *Chequered Flag*, were graphically very primitive with fairly simple gameplay. That is, you had a single car, a selection of tracks which were more or less the right shape, and not a lot else. The novelty was in having a 3D display, crude as it was.

Over the following years, many more racing simulations were to emerge. Slowly improvements were made to the simple effect achieved by *Chequered Flag*. Other cars were added, the background graphics and sprites were improved, and the handling of the car made more realistic. Now we are at the stage where, in terms of presentation and realism, the actual race itself has come about as far as it can given the constraints of existing technology.

So what's the next step? Well, Mandarin showed the way here. Motor Racing is about



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ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
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ATARI ST VERSION

The graphics are quite nice on the whole, although the roadside objects and other cars can sometimes look a bit wierd. Sound, other than a fairly nice piece of title music, is restricted to the usual engine and crashing sound effects, but these are done quite well.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	6
AUDIO	7	FUN FACTOR	7
ACE RATING 715			

far more than just the race itself. There is the preparation of the car, briefing the driver, organising pit stops, and countless other considerations necessary for successful racing. *Lombard Rally* went some way towards including these factors, in addition to superb graphics and realistic car handling.

Artronic are now giving the same treatment to Group C driving. The game is based around the Spice Engineering Team. The car you are driving is their SE89C Cosworth powered C1 racing car. All of the elements you expect from a game of this type are here. The graphics are fairly smooth and fast, and do manage to give an impression of speed. My only gripe on the graphics front is that the roadside objects and other cars are not that convincing.

As far as handling is concerned, the simulation is reasonably realistic. You can almost feel the engine complaining if you

Artronic speed into the competitive world of racing simulations

try to overwork it at low gears. The car will also stall in certain circumstances. You certainly can't get round any of the courses by slamming your foot (or finger) down and hurtling round the whole thing in top gear, no matter how deft you are with a joystick. Try this and you'll only end up coming off the road at the first sharp corner, and that is a bone shuddering experience, I can tell you. Unlike a lot of inferior simulations you really need to think as you drive, just as you would do with the real thing. It will take you at least three or four laps of each circuit before you have got the bends just right.

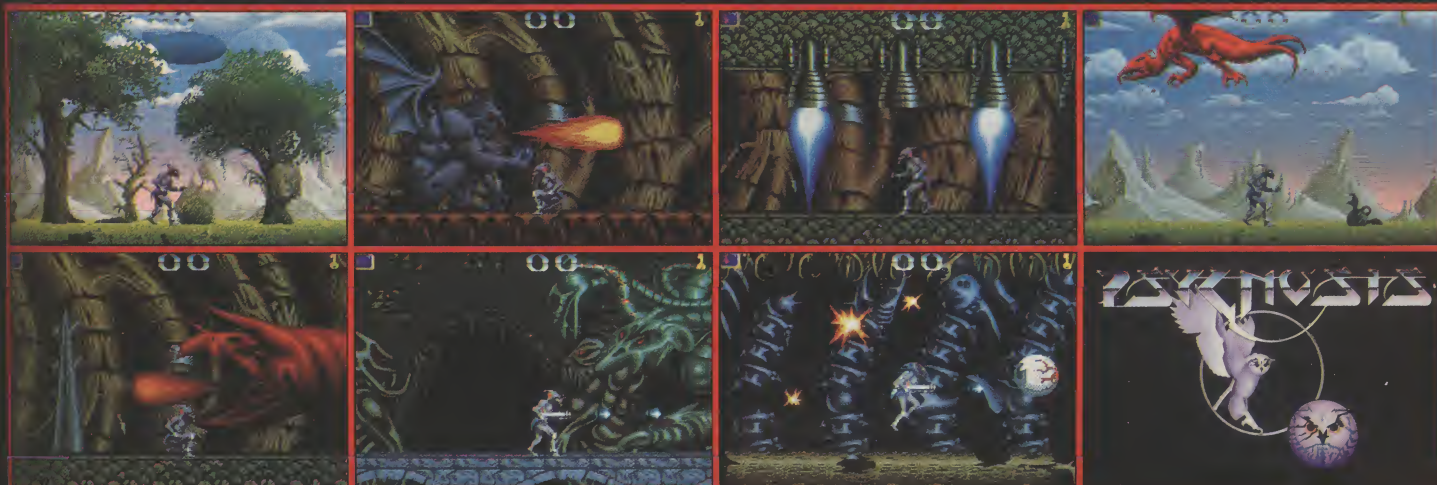
Your ultimate aim is to compete in, and win the world championship. Before you do that you can do practise laps for each of the available circuits. One very nice feature when you are practising is that you can't just go. You have to perform the correct starting up procedure first. This means switching on the electrics, the ignition, and so on. Then you can fire up the starter motor, put the car in gear and move off.

The other area in which *Fast Lane* has a little more than any run-of-the-mill racing game is in the pre-race preparation and pit stops. You have complete freedom to set up your car, from tyres to spoilers. It is very necessary to spend some time at this since the driving conditions can change quite drastically. You may be driving at night, or in pouring rain. These will obviously require a different mechanical setting to that needed for driving in the middle of the day in hot, dry conditions.

Undoubtedly *Fast Lane* has many superior features, and these will appeal to racing enthusiasts. In essence, however, the game does not really score much over some of the other driving simulations to appear recently. Do give it a try though — it could well be your cup of tea.

● Laurence Scottford





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FANTAVISION

DOMARK/BRODERBUND get animated.

FANTAVISION aims to take the hassle out animation by doing most of the hard work for you. Simply by drawing a character in one frame, and then drawing it in either a different position or pose in the next, the program will supply the in-between stages required to create a moving and animated sequence.

The program works on any Amiga, although the more memory available the more ambitious a project can be, and all graphic modes, including HAM, are supported. As the program is specifically designed to create the objects and characters in the foreground of an animated sequence, backgrounds should be drawn (or digitised) with a dedicated art package, and then imported. To this end *Fantavision* will accept any standard .IFF or ILBM picture file.

POINTED OBJECTS

The objects being created and animated in the foreground are made up from points, with lines connecting them. The more points an object has, the smoother and more complex it appears on screen. Even circles are simply a collection of points, the default being 18, which only become noticeable with quite large circles covering most of the screen. The default maximum number of points that an object can have is 64, though both those figures are only

restricted by available memory and speed loss. Having enough memory to produce a 400 point object may be fine, but it isn't going to move quickly when *Fantavision* tries to animate it.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

There are a number of tools to aid object creation, including a pencil, square, circle, knife, point inserter and bitmap creator. In order to finish an object, and fill it with the currently selected colour and fill pattern (there are 37), it is necessary to plot the final point in the same position as the first. This isn't particularly easy so the right mouse button, which undoes the previously plotted point, is frequently utilised. The bitmap creator icon allows for rectangular slices of pictures to be cut and stored as an object. However, an object created in this manner cannot be rotated or manipulated, but can merely have its position moved.

The most powerful tools are the rotate, zoom, and the 3-D rotate options. The latter can be used to rotate the object around a horizontal axis, thus giving the appearance of flipping the object end over end, or around a vertical axis to simulate the object turning away from the viewer, before turning completely back around again.

Unfortunately there is a small problem with these options in that any object so rotated

becomes smaller, an anomaly caused by rotating a two dimensional object in three dimensions. Should an object be rotated from one frame to the next so that it appears edgewise on, that object in the second frame cannot be then rotated back again using the same tool. In order to get around this, it is necessary to copy the original object over to the third frame for fresh manipulation.

The final collection of tools allow objects to be leant either on the vertical or horizontal axis, squashed or stretched, and flipped back to front or upside down.

OBJECTS IN MOTION

Having created as many objects as required in the first frame of a *Fantavision* film the next step is to move and manipulate them all in the second. Rather than having to copy all the objects across, the program allows entire frames to be cloned. Then all that needs to be done is to add or take away points from objects, and to move them to their new positions. New objects can be introduced at any point, and old ones can be deleted, or even made part of the background. Objects moving across the background do not disturb it, but should that background be a HAM image then very strange colour smearing effects are noticeable inside an object as it is animated.

It is the number of in-between stages, supplied

by the program, which determines the apparent smoothness of the animation. The default number is 16 but this can be upped to a maximum of 128. If a high number is selected, and there are a lot of objects, each with a sizeable number of points then it is usually necessary to increase the speed of the animation from 25% to anything up to 400%.

There are four styles of animation which govern what the film will look like when running. The first is Normal mode, which simply erases an object from one position, restores the background, then redraws the object at the next. This is the default for all frames, but can be changed on any or all frames to one of the following: background, lightning and trace. Background as mentioned earlier is used to make an object become part of the background and thus not affected by any of the other objects or any special effects. Lightning simply causes the object to flash as it is moved, and is most effective when the object has a different colour border than the fill colour, and the animation speed is slow. Finally trace mode does not erase an object at all when animating it, thus leaving a trail behind it. If a subsequent frame then is set to normal mode all the trail shapes will be removed, leaving only the object in its final position.

COLOURS

Each frame has its own associated palette of 32 colours which can be modified independently of all the others, or globally if so desired. Each colour can be redefined individually, or the overall brightness of the whole palette can be increased or decreased quite easily. Colours can be swapped around, copied, or a range of shades can be produced by nominating the start and finish colours. Any changes to the palette can be undone if they go drastically wrong, and if wholesale changes prove unsuitable then the entire palette can be changed back to its default settings instantly. Naturally any palette can be copied and pasted onto any other frame within the film.

SOUNDS INTERESTING

Of course it wouldn't be much of a cinematic spectacular if there was no sound, though



some might argue the case for the silent cinema. Fantavision does not provide anything in the manner of programming the sound chip to produce effects or facilitating arranging notes to produce music. Rather, it offers two channels of sampled sound (standard .IFF format) per frame.

There are a number of examples on the Fantavision disk, which can be loaded and experimented with using the volume, balance, echo, pitch and duration sliders. Just one basic sample can be made to sound quite different in a number of frames simply by introducing an echo and altering the pitch. Any sound can be test played to see whether it is what you want, and if not it can be removed from memory.

Once a sound effect meets requirements adding it to the film is simplicity itself. Go to the right frame and click on Sound from the Film menu, then on the OK gadget.

THE WRITTEN WORD

Undoubtedly the single most disappointing aspect of Fantavision is the manner in which it handles text. There are only four fonts, of which only two are really usable, and there is no option to design any more. However, fonts designed with other packages can be loaded in. Text is produced by creating a box, and then

writing inside it. The standard alterations to the typeface, such as bold, italics, and underline can be used, but they affect all the text within the box, rather than just specific lines. Worse still is that the most powerful tools in the Fantavision locker, the rotate, squeeze, stretch and flip options simply resize the actual text box. The text inside is not altered in any manner, but reformatted so that it fits within the new box.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SLOPPY

The smoothness and speed of animation in a Fantavision movie are very impressive, as are the object manipulation tools, and the program only really starts to falter when dealing with text. The mouse control is a little sloppy when using the colour palette, and it is very easy to make a mistake when creating an object. Thankfully it is nearly as easy to correct those mistakes.

While Fantavision certainly can't let you produce the Last Starfighter on your Amiga, it does have many other applications and gives a thorough grounding in the basic techniques of animation.

● Duncan Evans



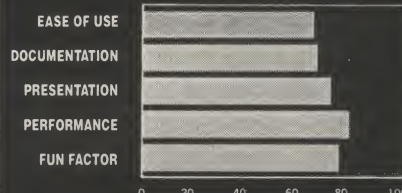
TURN TO THE PINKS...

For an explanation of animation techniques, consult this month's Pink Pages.

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ACE UTILITY RATING



Fun to use with powerful features, marred by annoying shortcomings

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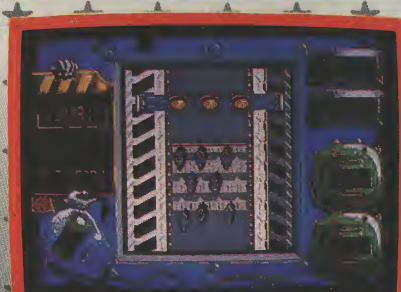
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◀ Your ship twists through empty space, but you won't be alone for long. This is as good a time as any to test your strength and practise a few laser volleys.

the navigation computer (which shows the area you are in as a 2D grid with each square containing a symbol to show its contents), the view changes to that of your surroundings, displayed using filled 3D vector graphics. This view is used to dock with space-stations, and also for skirmishes with other craft. As you lock onto another ship, guides appear to show which way to turn to get them in your sights. You soon discover that to transform anything into space debris requires more firepower than your standard laser can offer. Plasma bombs, heat-seeking missiles, nuclear missiles (!), or improved lasers can all be bought (for a price, of course) from all good space stations.

The 3D view is also required for travel between Malir gates. Having approached the tube-like gate correctly, space disappears, replaced by

SPACE ROGUE

ORIGIN boldly goes...

MALIR Gates are like Interstellar Channel Tunnels, they hang in Space waiting to catapult daring travellers across vast pan-galactic distances within a matter of seconds. Near the entrance to such a gate, a Cadet on EVA moves away from the merchant craft Princess Blue towards a curiously abandoned scout vessel. Suddenly... alarmingly... a swarm of the human race's worst enemies - the Manchi - arrive. They atomise the Princess Blue before leaving without so much as a "Sorry about the mess". With nowhere else to go, the Cadet enters the scout ship. All systems seem to work. Swearing to avenge the destruction of the Princess Blue, the Cadet commandeers the ship and becomes a "Space Rogue"...

...Which isn't the exciting life it's cracked up to be. Naive ideas that being a Space Rogue means swooping daringly around other ships and pulverising them with weapons of incredible force soon fade away. It transpires that the title brings with it a life of journeying to space stations, mining rigs and distant outputs to explore and solve puzzles.

Exploration is in the classic *Ultima* style. You move in a Gauntlet-esque fashion between rooms; encountering doors, objects, arcade

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PC VERSION

The colourful and rapid flight and exploration graphics add to the lure of this interesting game. Sound, though, is sparse but this is a peripheral point as you delve deeper into the game's mysteries.

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	8
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	7

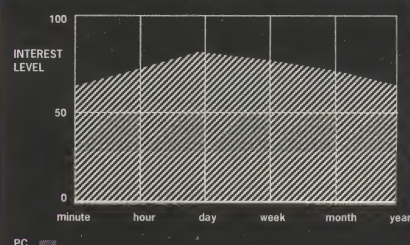
ACE RATING 765

machines (displaying "Hive", a game within this game, like *Space Quest III's* "Space Chickens") and people. These people are vital to the game, you have to talk to them to gain any help at all. In the right way at that, or you could

blow chances of riches, help or indispensable information. Being open and frank means you get sucked into missions such as bribe delivery, helping rogue androids, or undertaking to raid a merchant ship to get pally with pirates. Actually, you do get to do a bit of pulverising. If you switch from

Oh dear, looks like there's something very sinister going on...

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

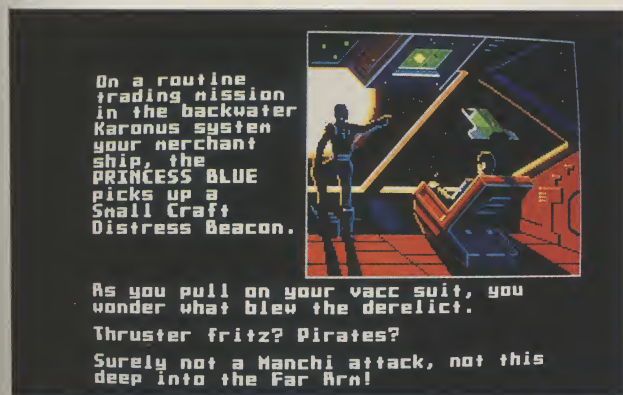


An initially awkward game which will soon hold you in its web of intrigue.

a seemingly endless succession of circles which weave their way into the distance. Not passing squarely through a circle (!) means a gradual loss of shield power which will have the same eventual effect as being hit by a very big missile... it's so easy to die in space.

Don't you just know it's time to cancel social engagements when you get an Origin game and wade through the box's contents. A novella, catalogue, key guide, ship reference card, warranty card, arcade game advert, poster, owner's guide... you can imagine the glint in the eyes of the lumberjacks as they shouted "Pass the Chainsaw" and chopped down another forest for Origin's use (little bit of politics, my name's Jeffrey Davey, thank you and goodnight). But I forgive their destruction of woodland because it's a good game. Whilst it starts off confusing, gradually more and more things pop up to interest the player. OK, so space combat has been done before but this is enjoyably varied with extra weapons, great graphics and innovative touches. You can even see other ships dog-fighting and, as you manoeuvre, view your ship from an out-of-cockpit perspective, neat!

● Jeffrey Davy



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POWER

ACTIVISION go for Xmas pole position

MAJOR end of year conversions are something of a speciality for Chris Butler. The long serving 8 bit programmer has been responsible for producing home computer releases of arcade games around Christmas before with *Thunderblade* last year, and, in the past, *Space Harrier* and *720*.

Butler's work has some hallmarks, and one of the most notable of these is his ability to produce very fast scrolling and that's obviously a recommendation for a race game like *Power Drift*.

Whether *Power Drift* can be a major Christmas contender is less clear. The game was undoubtedly a success in the arcades, but I'm not sure why. Compared to other race games released this year like *Monaco GP*, *Hard Drivin* and Namco's *Winning Streak* though, it's not in the same class for graphics, sound or realism. Nevertheless in the past average arcade games have made excellent conversions and topped the charts. *Combat School* comes to mind.

Where *Power Drift* does have an edge, is in the format of its game design. It's a fun game, rather than a no-nonsense grand prix racer, with a cast of wacky characters charging around a course which is a mixture of off-road racing and fun park roller coasting.

The idea is to complete five courses, each of five stages, composed of four laps. There's a field of twelve to battle it out with and to qualify you'll have to finish in the top three to continue on in the game. That's it.

One major plus in favour of this conversion is that it all loads in one go, so there's no delay while you wait for extra courses to appear, or worse still, fail to appear when the game crashes. There is a price for this and that's in the omission of the bonus track. Elsewhere everything points to another competent piece of programming. The game certainly moves quickly enough, with a reasonably smooth screen update and responsive controls and a well balanced challenge. The characters all have their own quirks and it's nice to see them gesturing offensively - the most attractive touch of the coin op - when they pass a competitor.

There's no mistaking Chris Butler's style,

and there's no mistaking his graphics, largely constructed of character blocks, which give the game a square look. There's also a lack of colour that makes it a little drab looking. Sound is competent, but offers little in aural interest with no samples or speech from the coin-op.

Power Drift is undoubtedly a competent conversion, but whether the licence is strong enough to make it a big seller is unclear. Certainly if you compare it to Microprose's *Stunt Car* (reviewed elsewhere this issue) it doesn't compete as a purist's racing game. I know which I'd rather play.

● Mike Pattenden



AMIGA VERSION

If the 64 conversion is competent and playable, then its 16 bit counterpart is the opposite. Graphically and sonically it's all you could want, but as a piece of programming it's a dog's dinner. The challenge rapidly dissipates when you realise the game is unplayable in places. At certain points the track just becomes a mess, leaving you to wonder which way to turn. The result is confusion and lost time. Take it away from me.

GRAPHICS 8 **IQ FACTOR** 4
AUDIO 8 **FUN FACTOR** 6
ACE RATING 645

C64 VERSION

More of an interpretation of the original coin-op than a direct conversion attempt. This pays dividends in the gameplay as the road layouts are far more playable – particularly the absence of the crossovers. Graphics and sound are also more basic but again the plain grey tracks are more convincing than the attempt on the Amiga version to emulate the coin-op tracks with all their detail. Animation is competent in the C64 version – making for an absorbing race game.

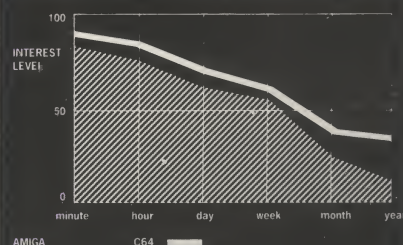
GRAPHICS 8 **IQ FACTOR** 4
AUDIO 8 **FUN FACTOR** 8
ACE RATING 725



DRIFT

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

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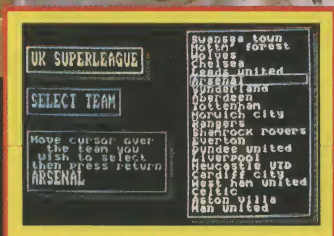
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I don't know what he is smiling about, in the racing game of the year stakes, this effort from Dinamic just fails to qualify!

1989 will without doubt be remembered as the year of the race game - we've seen Continental Circus, Stunt Car Racer, Power Drift, RVF, Test Drive II, WEC Le Mans and Vette, and with Hard Drivin', Chase HQ and Turbo OutRun still to come, there's virtually no room left on the starting grid for yet another contender - or at least that's what it would seem...

Dinamic Software's effort is based on the 80cc Motorcycling World Championship, and comes approved by Jorge Martinez 'Aspar', four times World Champion. Your aim is to follow in Aspar's tyre tracks and win the Championship.

Grand Prix Master's most noticeable innovation is the use of a scrolling plan view a la Hot Rod to portray the action, as opposed to the more familiar first and second person perspectives. There are seven tracks to race over, all



GRAND PRIX

On your bike DINAMIC

AMSTRAD VERSION

Grand Prix Master is spoiled by sloppy execution - the scrolling is jerky to the point of being distracting (a flaw which is inexcusable on the ST and Amiga) and the control mode is so fiddly just staying on the track is a tiresome and frustrating job. To cap it all the graphics are too small and poorly defined - it takes a while just to work out which way round the bike is facing! With so many excellent racing games currently on the circuit, there's no need to have to resort to this sub-standard effort.

GRAPHICS 4 IQ FACTOR 2
AUDIO 3 FUN FACTOR 3
ACE RATING 423

of them supposedly faithful recreations of the real things.

Before going into the Championship head first, players can opt to take a spin round the tracks in a warm-up lap or take in an aerial preview of the track before taking part in a compulsory qualification round from which the slowest 4 of the 12 racers are eliminated. Then fol-

The riders are lined up on the starting grid, the crowd are waiting, the pit crews are ready, and the tension is mounting... well, sort of!

lows the race proper, and if you emerge from that victorious, you go on to the next circuit...and the next...and the next. A status panel provides all the relevant race data including speed, current position and remaining laps.

As in real Grand Prix racing, wins and positions are converted into points that are accumulated on a master scoreboard to form a racer's 'league' - the highest points scorer at the end of the tournament gets to soak everyone with Champagne.

Grand Prix Master lacks the one thing that makes or breaks a racing game - any feeling of speed or exhilaration. The 'action' crawls along

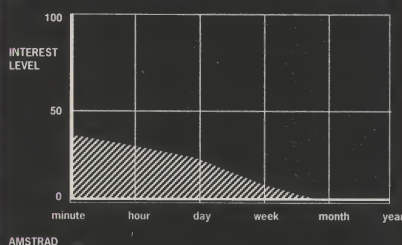
at a snail's pace (that is, when you're not struggling with the control mode) and the lack of any sound effects in favour of an unsuitable in-game tune doesn't help matters. With so many excellent racing games currently on the circuit, there's no need to have to resort to this sub-standard effort.

● Gary Whitta

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PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



No point in driving down this slope - you can walk it just as easily.



The ball amidst some of the many hazards to be found in *Rock 'n' Roll* from German games wizards, Rainbow Arts.

WARNING! If you like sleeping don't buy this game. If you want to ignore my advice then go right ahead, but don't blame me when you find yourself huddled over your keyboard at three o'clock in the morning, bleary eyes fixed on the screen, hand feverishly clutching the mouse... get the picture? Good, 'cos I assure you it will happen.

Rock 'n' Roll is one of the most brilliantly addictive games I have come across in a very long time. There are elements of many other games within it, but it manages to combine these to create a very distinctive flavour - one that you will take to instantly.

The game has you controlling a ball through a series of 32 levels. These are divid-



ROCK 'N' ROLL

ed across 7 continents each of which has different features and peculiarities. If you remember *Marble Madness* you will have some idea of the way that the game works.

The mouse is used to control the ball. The speed with which you move the mouse affects the ball's speed and inertia, while the direction of movement, obviously enough, affects the heading of the ball. This actually works very well and, provided your mouse is clean and working properly, you will find the game extremely playable using this method of control. It wouldn't have been quite the same using a joystick - it remains to be seen how well the game will work on joystick only formats.

There is only one way to get through each level and it will take quite a bit of experimentation before you find it. Things aren't quite as simple as just rolling a little ball around a two dimensional surface since there are various objects to be negotiated. These take the form of magnets, which attract the ball, ventilators, which blow the ball away, arrows, which roll the ball in a specific direction and so on. As well as impeding your progress and generally making a nuisance of themselves, many of the objects will also drain your energy. Lose too much energy and your ball collapses miserably.

AMIGA VERSION

While the graphics are not exactly pushing this machine to the limit, they are still very nice. The scrolling, on the whole, is very smooth. Sound is a bit repetitive, but you can turn it off quite easily. This is going to be one of those addictive games that will make Amiga owners sleepy eyed and late for work. What better reason do you need to buy it?

GRAPHICS 8 **IQ FACTOR** 7
AUDIO 6 **FUN FACTOR** 9

ACE RATING 875

Will Rainbow Arts
roll straight to the
top slot?

The other aspect of the game world - which you will soon learn the hard way - is that it's built on a platform sitting high about a blue graphic sea which can be seen executing a very nice piece of parallax scrolling through occasional gaps in the landscape. Roll into one of these gaps and you plunge headlong to your death. Unless, that is, you happen to possess one or more little parachutes. Open these up

before you hit the bottom and your ball will live to roll another day.

Parachutes are one of the many useful items you can pick up within the game world. Some of these will be essential if you are to complete the level. The handy goodies you can collect include the aforementioned parachutes, armour for your ball, coloured keys for accessing appropriately coloured doors, bombs, and so forth. The purpose of most of the items is self-explanatory, but you will still have to work out exactly when and where each of them should be put to use.

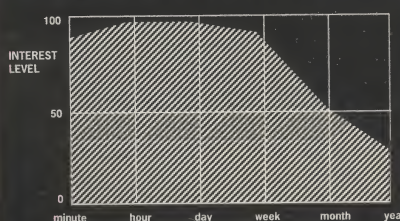
Nothing comes for free, however, so before you can collect any goodies you have to find some money to pay for them. This comes in the form of coins of various denominations left lying around on each level. Further reward comes in the shape of coloured diamonds which, when collected, give you bonus points, the value of which depend on the colour of the gem.

The ideas in *Rock 'n' Roll* are not exactly revolutionary, and if you have played lots of similar ball games then there might not be enough new elements here to hold your interest. My only other gripe is that the soundtrack, while being quite OK for a while, is a bit repetitive - but you do have the option to switch it off. It is these two things alone that stop this from becoming a 900+ game, otherwise all the right elements are there.

There are some very nice touches, like the way the ball slips and slides over patches of ice, and the way the view pans as the ball travels through pipes. But these are all just icing on a very nice cake. I would venture that this is the best of 'control the ball' type games to appear yet, and unless you are absolutely sick of them, (or you really are concerned about your beauty sleep), then I thoroughly recommend you pop out and buy it today!

● Laurence Scotford

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



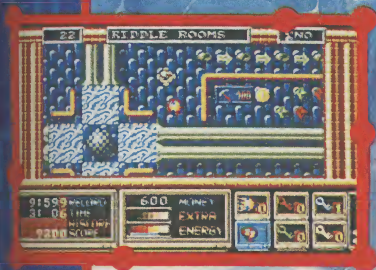
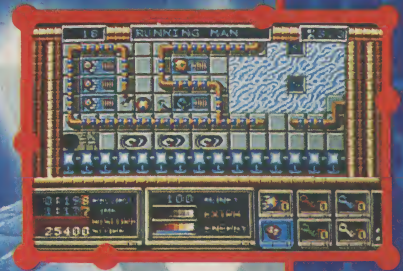
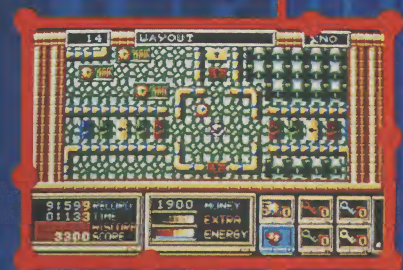
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Screen shots from Amiga version.

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UPDATES

THIS MONTH'S CONVERSIONS INCLUDE STUNT CAR FOR C64



PC TAKES COMMAND

CARRIER COMMAND

Rainbird/Microprose PC £24.95

Volcanic activity has created a vast archipelago from the depths of the ocean, unexplored, and unclaimed by any world power. For a long time now the Earth's accessible resources have been near to exhaustion, but this new cluster of lands has thrown up a rich supply of minerals and materials vital to continued life on the planet.

As the commander of a multi-role assault carrier, a secret document has been given to you which reveals full details about the islands and their contents. Unfortunately, a foreign power has gained access to your computers and is slowly, but surely, occupying territories for itself. Allowing them to gain control over the archipelago will mean starvation and ruin for your people; destroying them will lead to wealth and a secure future. Your mission has begun...

The weaponry to accomplish this task includes a fleet of mantas (futuristic jets), amphibious assault craft, a laser turret, surface-to-surface missiles, decoy flares and mobiles, and a ship's stores packed with the latest mili-

tary hardware. If your carrier is damaged you can set it to repair itself, but too much damage means destruction and the end of the game.

Capturing an island involves knocking out its defences (so making it 'free'), then sending off a landing craft to construct a new base. Gain a cluster of islands and you can establish a supply and communications network. However, everything is played out in real time — so, while you're busy knocking out enemies, the enemy is equally busy occupying territory further north.

From the beginning you're offered the choice between strategy and action games — the former gives you a quieter introduction and is recommended for beginners. The latter launches you straight into the heat of the battle, as homing missile rain down on your carrier with blunt efficiency. Because of the depth of the game, Realtime Software have thoughtfully provided a save game option.

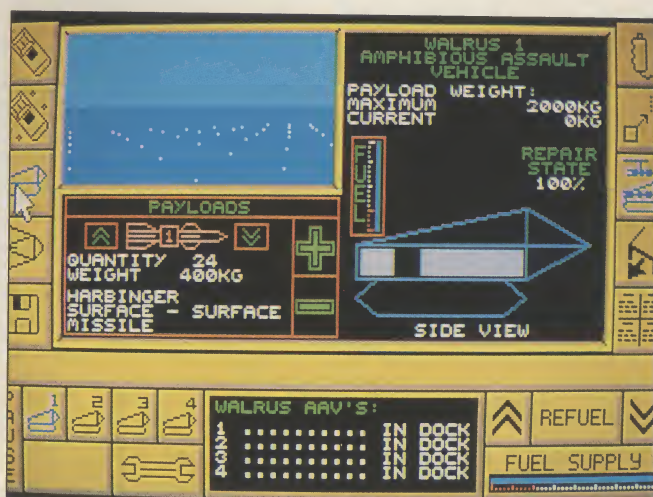
Although the ST and Amiga versions have been out for over a year, and the superlative Spectrum version for a few months, Carrier Command proves its timelessness as a game. This version

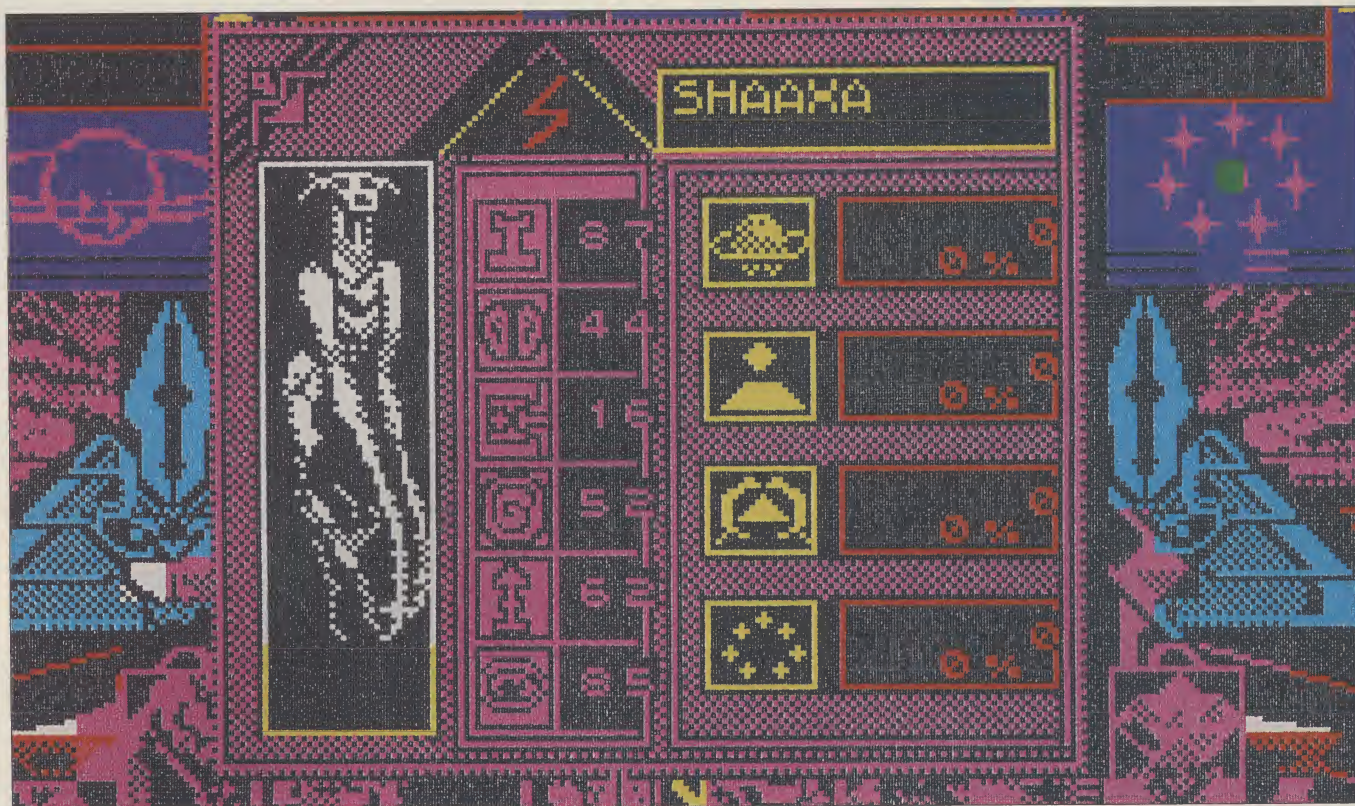
is arguably the best of the lot — even on low Mhz machines it moves very fast, and supports all the options you could want from a PC game. It runs in most colour modes (Hercules, CGA, EGA, VGA, and Tandy 16-colour), it can be transferred to a hard disk (though you still need the floppy to act as a 'key'), and it offers the choice between mouse, keyboard, or joystick control — though mouse is by far the best. Even the slowness of travelling between islands has

been overcome by an added 'warp' mode.

If you're keen on strategy/action games, you won't find one better than this: it takes time to get into, but is all the more rewarding for it. Carrier Command has an incredible amount of depth and long-term playability and should provide any serious gamesplayer with months of enjoyment.

ACE RATING: 965





PURPLE SATURN

PURPLE SATURN DAY Spectrum +3 £14.99dk £9.99cs

Ever fancied kissing the Purple Saturn Queen? Well, if you win the annual Purple Saturn Day Games, you've got no choice, since sucking face with her majesty is the ultimate prize. This year, the Good Lord Exxos has randomly selected the four events for the game himself: Ring Pursuit, Time Jump, Tronic Slider and Brain Bowler.

You can choose any of the four from the initial selection screen. Ring Pursuit has you racing around Saturn's rings in a kind of slalom. Coloured space ships mark your route — you fly to the right of the red ones and to the left of yellow ones, all the time aiming to stay in front of your opponent to score points.

The Tronic Slider places you and your adversary on the orbiting energy field. Shoot the energy balls released into the game area and they yield fragments which are yours to collect. The player who collects the most fragments in the time allowed is the winner.

Brain Bowler is by far the most rewarding of the sub-games, because the random puzzle element makes each game different. You're placed on opposite sides of an intergalactic 'brain', controlling an electro-ball which can alter switches, collect energy and allow electrical charges to reach six pins which activate the central Exxos. It's much easier to get the

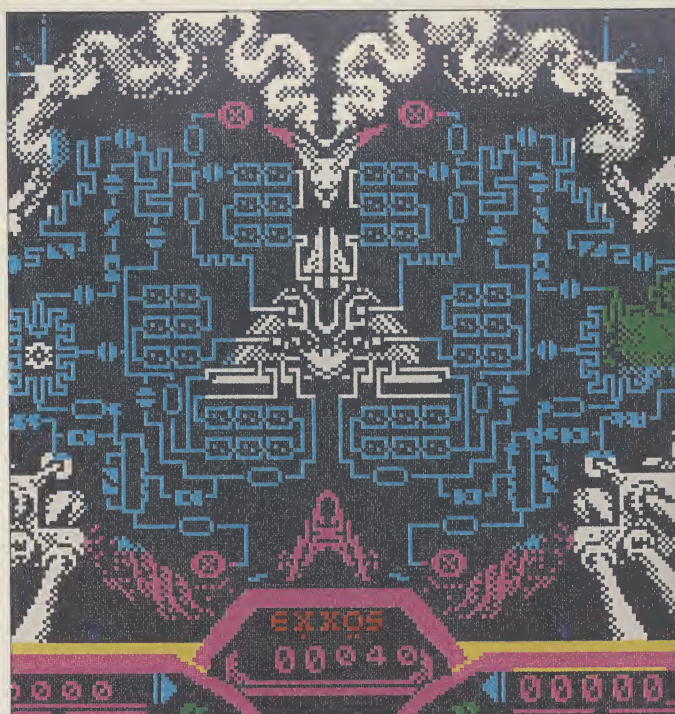
hang of than to describe, and would make a neat budget game on its own.

In contrast, the Time Jump is probably the most redundant of the sporting quartet. You have to jump as far as possible into the future by capturing energy sparks — a kind of operation Wolf in space. These sparks provide fuel for a gravity catapult which launches you through time and space. Once you've catapulted, you're presented with an image generated randomly according to the amount you jumped — all very nice, but a bit pointless.

What this boils down to is a collection of four reasonably good sub-games, loosely strung over a scenario of competition. There are rounds leading up to a final with opponents of increasing difficulty, and there's a practise game against a robot — but ultimately, there are just four events.

Purple Saturn Day has a brilliant manual which lists such things as recommended diets (including Putrex Vomicus quince) and forbidden substances (good luck shrunken chicken heads), but even they can't save the game as a whole from being just on the good side of mediocre. If you want something a bit weird that's good fun for a while, check it out; if you're used to games with plenty of variety, leave it on the shelf.

ACE RATING: 680



C64 STUNT CAR

STUNT CAR RACER

Microstyle £9.99cs £14.99dk ST version reviewed Issue 24

When 16-bit *Stunt Car* arrived, we loved it. We sat down and talked with it, eventually took it to dinner, had a long lasting relationship with it, and finally proposed marriage. C64 *Stunt Car* is every bit as good as the ST incarnation.

It may be a little short on colours but short of gameplay, or indeed speed, it ain't. The cockpit

graphics are almost identical to the ST and the Amiga versions, which is pretty amazing, but the most extraordinary thing is the speed. Solid vectors have never been so good on a C64. You can feel every bump, your stomach heaves as you fly over huge hills and jumps, and you cringe as you come off the track at one of its highest points.

A perfect conversion of an amazing game.

ACE RATING: 941